

THE  
HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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BY R.M. JOHNSTON



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By R. M. Johnston

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# THE HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH







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FROM ITS REMOTE ORIGINS  
TO THE PRESENT DAY

BY

R. M. JOHNSTON



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TO  
J. THEODORE MERZ







## PREFACE

THE methods and aims of this book are so amply dealt with in the introduction, that there is happily little left with which to weary the reader by way of preface. Unexpectedly enough the modern period has proved the most difficult and least satisfactory to compose. For above all things it appeared necessary that the centuries lying between the Reformation and the present day should not occupy more than the two chapters allotted to them. Had the modern period been dealt with on a larger scale, the proportion would have been lost exactly in the way in which it is generally lost when men attempt to think back from the present to the past. The proportion was the essential thing, and in the thankless task of trying to attain it many mangled remains have, with compunction and regret, been strewn along my path.

I have to acknowledge the valuable help of my friend and colleague Professor Toy, of Harvard University, who read the draft of the first six chapters and made many valuable suggestions; he is not, however, responsible for any statements I have made.







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## INTRODUCTION

THE attitude of our time towards Christianity has many aspects easier to summarize than to explain. These range all the way from the Papal view, with its strict doctrine of inspiration, authority, and discipline, to that other extreme, immediately beyond which lies the non-Christian view, whether hostile or indifferent. Between them the great educated mass of western Europe and America holds an uncertain position with a tendency, perhaps, to shift unevenly towards the two extremes. From the group of the intellectual Catholics, or Modernists, to the least dogmatic of the Protestant sects, there exists a great, vague mass of Christian thought that lacks the definiteness found on either side of it, and about which some general propositions can be formulated.

In this average body of Christianity in flux, as it may be called, two general tendencies may be noted. The first, which is also the more general, is in line with the strict Roman position; it is that which is prevailing more and more widely in Protestant countries at the present day and that merges religious practice into the habitual social custom that implies the maximum of respectability with the minimum of thought; it is a tendency as deep-seated as the sluggishness of the ordinary intellect and the ordinary conscience. And there can be little enough room for intellectual unrest where the attitude is one of mere resistance to



all that is not customary, of anathema for all that is non-habitual; and all this increasing emphasis on observance is accompanied by a decreasing interest in dogma.

The second of these general tendencies is that found among more reflective and more courageous minds, and here are in fact the readers that this book has in view. They are individuals of all sects and creeds, and of all degrees of education, who feel working within them the fundamental thought of our age, the evolutionary idea, the perception that the Cosmos is not static but fluid, and who attempt to bring this thought into accord with their religious ideas. The struggle takes on diverse shapes. It reformulates the old formulas under a more or less Darwinian guise. It screens ugly chasms of Hebraic deism with the flowers of opportunistic allegory. It timidly seeks enlightenment; dubiously delves into history; persuades itself into scientific attitudes and certainties, forgetting that in pure science thousands of exploded fallacies form the base of the insecure knowledge of to-day. It cloaks religion with morality, and dogma with ethics; or it affects historical scepticism as the foundation of a neo-Christian rationalism, and generally shows the confusion that might be expected of intelligent beings who are conscientiously attempting to reconcile two such profoundly different things as the thought of the centuries that witnessed the formation of Christianity and that of the present age.

For when such conscientious and intelligent persons look backwards in an attempt to solve their dif-



ficulties and to reach a personal interpretation of Christianity, what is it that faces them? Human knowledge. And what is human knowledge? An accumulation, in the worst sense of the term, with only here and there a real effort at creating form from chaos. And so to look backwards at Christianity means essentially taking a number of isolated peeps at numerous things not obviously related, and so remote from our own conditions as to give no sense of reality. The Hebrews of Moses and Solomon; Athens of the Age of Pericles; Gnostic philosophy; Jesus; the early martyrs; Monasticism; the Papacy; and a dozen other matters are not readily fitted to one another, have no convincing connectedness. Each is a province under the sway of specialists, philologists, historians, philosophers, archæologists, divines, folklorists and others. Each has a literature, tending more and more to become a glut of critical snippets deeply embedded in increasingly technical reviews. Each exacts years of study for a thorough acquaintance, and for that very reason tends to exclude knowledge of what lies next door. And by such means the enquirer who starts with a desire to know about Christianity generally finishes, if sufficiently persistent, in learning something of a special topic, which he is little more able than before to bring into line with his essential thought.

All this must have made the secret plain. The object of this book is chiefly to attempt coördination, to seize the proportions, the relations, the movement, the essential facts of Christianity as seen over a period



of more than two thousand years, over nations that stretch from Kashmir to California, over civilizations as wide apart as those of the Age of Pericles and of Napoleon, of Gnosticism and of the Trusts. As these words are written, the effort seems almost foolhardy. There are difficulties in more than one direction clearly insurmountable. The scholar whose field is more especially modern history and who ventures into the Middle Ages is bold; yet in this case the Middle Ages may seem modern and simple compared with the infinitely delicate ground of the three centuries before Jesus. Most difficult of all is that mysterious figure itself, whose name has been the chameleon label with which the great mass of Western humanity has for so many centuries bedecked its hopes and its ideals. If the attempt is here made to place it in its tremendous setting, it is with a full realization of how inadequate the best efforts must remain, of how certain will be the retribution meted out to a scholarship that must inevitably stumble over many details, and yet with a bold resolve to do all that can be done with care and conscience, to set out fairly the greatest of all histories, almost that of Western civilization itself. And after all there is a justification. The history of the Christian Church as a whole has never been written. Many historians even openly evade the subject, deal with the Middle Ages as though the establishment and growth of the Church were not the central fact but only a subsidiary incident, very much as the ordinary man shrugs his shoulders and avoids a topic with



which he feels himself unable to grapple. It is just that, more than anything else, which may validate this halting attempt to set out the facts of a great movement in the terms of dispassionate historical observation.

Introductory material is wearisome, yet there is another aspect of this book which it is essential to state clearly at the earliest possible moment. The reader should have before him the point of view that lies behind the method of this historical enquiry, and for this purpose a few more paragraphs are necessary.

A German theologian, who has deeply impressed modern thought, took as his point of departure the idea that, in the nature of things, Christianity could not exist at the time of Jesus, but only after his death. This is little more than a matter of definition, and there is no need to quarrel with it; yet, to study the history of Christianity in a modern spirit, it is necessary to go back not merely to the time of Jesus, but to a period stretching back several centuries beyond. And to make clear why that which is therefore not, strictly speaking, Christianity, is included in its history we must cast a quick, preliminary glance at certain currents of thought of our own age, and of that immediately preceding it.

Only a few centuries ago Roman Christianity was the universal religion of western Europe, buttressed by the supremacy of the Latin tongue, based on the authority of the Papal hierarchy and tradition. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the structure was rigid in appearance, with no generally discernible



semblance of movement forward or backward, and that thought concerning it was static. The Church appeared to be four square, immovable, unchanging.<sup>1</sup>

Then came the Reformation, the attack from within, a splitting of the great rock in two; and thought changed. There arose a current of criticism, of investigation:—What mean the ceremonies of the Church? Whence do Popes, Cardinals, Bishops derive their authority? What were the actual words that Jesus spoke? And, in terms of action, Calvinism, Anglicanism, Puritanism, were some of the replies to these questions; and thought, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, took on new hues.

But it went further. Started now on the road of investigation and criticism, furnished with new languages fresh minted for this new work, thought soon burst the bonds of the new isms, just as incapable of remaining within the limits of Lutheranism or Presbyterianism as it had been within those of Romanism. The result was a further splitting of Protestant Christianity into the hundreds of sects now in existence, representing an infinite variety of more or less Christian beliefs, a splitting so constantly resplit as to be more like crumbling than splitting.

There was one point in Europe, however, where, although intellectualism was exceedingly vigorous, the repressive force of government was so strong that until the close of the eighteenth century this process was very much retarded; while England and Ger-

<sup>1</sup> This statement is subject to qualifications that will be found in the narrative.



many were becoming Protestant in the sense which still holds good, France was held down to the old conditions by Rome and the Bourbons, with this curious result, that when, in the eighteenth century, Bourbonism rapidly began to fall to pieces, French thought suddenly overleaped many transitions, voiced its criticism and the result of its investigations not in the tentative or modifying shape of Luther or Calvin, but in a form that went beyond even the most advanced Protestant thought. The long pent-up intellectualism of France suddenly burst through the old creed and swept it for a moment completely away; Atheism reigned among her governing classes, and Christianity suffered anew as it had at the time of Diocletian.

This was too sudden, too extreme, to last long. Catholicism came back with a vigour that ran strong for a considerable part of the nineteenth century. During the whole of that epoch in France, and during the early part of it elsewhere, the struggle continued on the new lines, Christianity *versus* Atheism. But if for a moment we leave on one side the Latin countries and turn to the Teutonic, thought takes a marked turn in a new direction from about the middle of the nineteenth century.

Scientific investigation of nature had for some time been increasing with rapidity when Darwin came to gather up the elements of the evolutionary ideas into an attractive summary adequately supplied with fascinating formulas. Average intellect thrives on a diet of formulas. So the evolutionary doctrines won



proselytes in all directions, and have since then become the substratum of our thought.

This is clearly not the place to launch out into any lengthened consideration of evolutionary doctrines; a few somewhat obvious generalizations will sufficiently clear the ground. First of all, it is evident that no thinker in touch with the movement of the present century can escape the conviction that evolutionism, in the broad sense of that word, represents a point of view that transcends the static idea with which Greek philosophy through the Christian creed saturated European thought. We are at the present moment repudiating Aristotelianism and reverting with astonishing rapidity to a modernized or scientized form of nature worship. It is the force of nature, the push of life, the movement, the constant flux, the conditions of change, the relativity and conditioning of one thing to another in never-ending sequence of growth and decay, and birth and growth again, that enchains our attention while it baffles our language, too early crystallized into non-fluid forms. And it will be generally admitted that the ancient struggle between Christianity and its enemies has been very materially diverted from its old current by the growth of these ideas. Both the churchman and his opponent now tend more and more to come to a common ground and to think of Christianity after the new mode. The word *truth* is slowly but surely being relegated to the pigeonhole as a meaningless exorcism from the intellectual juggling bag of the Aristotelians, while the word *movement*



is coming into more and more common use. We do not say, is Christianity true? is this or that dogma good? but we say,—what does the Christianity of to-day proceed from? and what is it proceeding to? what is its relation to life at our given point, and during our brief moment? Both Atheist and Christian tend to agree in a different conception of fact as a matter of growth, change, condition, and relation. Only in such terms as these can men of the present age think.

These few paragraphs, into which rather more has been compressed than they can quite conveniently hold, may serve to indicate the point of view from which the history of Christianity is now to be approached. It is that of to-day, or in other words one that is evolutionary or fluid, one that is searching for movement and not for abstract truth, one that is trying to seize the interrelation of a hundred factors and not to manufacture a new formula. And the first step in such a process is clear. Whether we think of Christianity as coming into existence at the birth of Christ, or at any other moment between that date and the conversion of Constantine, we must first find the seed from which it germinated, examine the soil in which that seed was planted, the atmosphere that developed it, in fact the hundred factors that preceded the thing itself and made it possible. For Christianity, like so much else in this world, is a composite, and its rudimentary elements seem far apart when we remember that its organization and cosmopolitanism came chiefly from Rome, its dogma



largely from Alexandria, its ritual in part from Asia Minor, its ethics from Judæa, and something even more important from Jesus Christ himself. In attempting to unravel these factors of a complex whole, we shall therefore first have to try to catch some large proportions of the remote centuries, — the seed bed, the soil, the atmosphere, — especially in the matter of the relations of Jewish, Greek, and Roman civilization. To do this it will be necessary to look at the oldest first, and therefore to take a glimpse at the early stage of Jewish national life; after which we can turn more securely to the Greeks and the Latins.



# THE HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH







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## CHAPTER I

### GREEK AND ROMAN THOUGHT BEFORE CHRIST

THE books of the Old Testament, however retrospective they may be, give the most interesting view that is to be found in any one collection of documents of a people emerging from pastoral and tribal conditions, evolving a code of law, developing a religious ideal and creating a considerable city and state. It is just the information that we lack concerning the early Greeks and the early Romans. We first see the Jews a people of nomads, wandering in the great triangle bordered by Babylonia, Syria, Egypt, and Arabia, finally conquering an abode in Palestine, in contact with many neighbours, yet preserving in marked degree their tribal or national individuality. In what did this individuality consist?

In the first place, a geographical condition may be noted. Palestine is curiously situated; it is a small country bounded by the desert to the east and by the Mediterranean to the west. The Mediterranean here has few and bad ports, and the Jews never learnt to be seafarers; the desert did not stimulate intercommunication, that is, trade routes. In Egypt, Babylonia, Syria, the conditions were different; these were countries framed on a larger scale, with great



waterways and irrigated areas, suited to develop large centres of population and economic activities. Judæa possessed little to attract from such a point of view; it was admirably suited to a pastoral people, whose tribes were with reluctance assuming settled habits and agricultural stability.

It was after their conquest of Palestine that the highly developed intellectuality of the Jews becomes perceivable in terms of history. At a very remote period, — the Jews conquered Palestine between the thirteenth and eleventh century before Christ, — a Jewish literature sprang up, a literature that continued productive until the first century A.D. and even later. The character of this literature can best be perceived by drawing a rough comparison between it and those of Rome and of Greece. The period over which this comparison must be established lies between a date not far short of 1000 B.C. and the year 200 A.D. Let us first see what Rome and what Greece accomplished within these limits of time.

One thousand years before Christ the city of Rome undoubtedly existed; yet five hundred years later she was barely emerging into historical view, while it was not until the third century before Christ that her permanent literature first took shape in the form of historical annals, echoes of the ancient records of the great families of the city. This beginning once made, development was rapid, and was largely governed by the fact that at this moment Rome was fast stretching out over the gulfs, islands and peninsulas of the Mediterranean. She came into contact with



the older and more artistic literature of Greece; she lost her provincial narrowness. History followed annals; poetry, not primitive but ripe, followed; satire, drama, oratory, all rapidly blossomed under Hellenic influence, — and almost as suddenly faded away. A residue of historical and philosophical writing persisted, yet before the year 200 A.D. Latin literature had produced almost all its important work. But the language was stronger on its non-literary side, and had a greater destiny yet in store, for it had become the medium of an imperial law, and of an imperial system of administration; and as the official tongue of the Mediterranean world it still had a great part to play in the politics and the religion of mankind.

The Greeks started earlier than the Romans. The first great event which their literature has recorded, the capture of Troy, occurred very possibly at much the same time as the conquest of Palestine by the Jews. The Trojan War was the subject of the epic poems later elaborated, at some uncertain date, under the names of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey." And nothing can serve better for a comparison of the Greek with the Jewish character than to place those corresponding records, the book of Homer and the book of Joshua, side by side.<sup>1</sup> The imaginative, aspiring luminosity of the one contrasts violently with the sombre and rancorous jealousy of the other. They

<sup>1</sup> Even if the book of Joshua belongs to a less primitive period than its position in the Old Testament suggests, an allowance of the same sort must be made in Homer's case, and the comparison does not seem too strained.



serve to mark the profound divergence of national feeling between two races and two modes of thought, from a startling combination of which Christianity was to spring many centuries later. This Græco-Jewish amalgam, cast into a Latin mould, was to prove the toughest of all the material out of which the modern world was created.

From the time of the Homeric poems Greek literature developed along imaginative and rhetorical lines. To condense its achievements into a brief space is almost impossible; but the ideas to insist on are those of beauty, of refinement, of a luxurious budding of flowers of all hues and all shapes. Drama, history, poetry, philosophy, all are abundant, subtle, beautiful. But for our present purpose let us detach a few features of special interest. In the first place, then, the poetic character of the Greek language is of fundamental importance. And poetic is here meant in the broadest possible sense, in the sense of language that appeals most to the ear, least to the eye, language full of harmonies and cadence, and delicate modulations and stress, language for which the ear strains and the mind vibrates with refining discrimination. It was that quality which permeated the whole, which gave such a supreme fragrance to the fleeting moment of highest development, and which became a source of weakness the instant that moment had passed.

The fifth and fourth centuries before Christ were the golden age of Greece, and after the golden age her tongue, together with those fundamental concep-



tions of life which had been evolved with it, had become the fixed medium, the unchanging vehicle of culture, the international language of the Asiatic empires of the Greek monarchs who, from Alexander to Kleopatra, ruled the East during the last three centuries before Christ (330-30 B.C.).

It may appear an exaggeration to single out in a literature so versatile and so prolific any single branch as deserving greater emphasis than the others, and yet viewing the Greek language in the light of developments that occurred many centuries after its great epoch was past, the historian may be allowed to dwell on the special significance of Greek philosophy. Historically speaking it is here that Greek literature was greatest, and that its impress was stamped deepest on European thought. This philosophy will have to be dealt with a little closely when we come to its direct contribution to Christianity; for what lies before, however, the subject must be generalized briefly and roughly, remembering that the immediate object is nothing more than to establish a good angle from which the literature of the Jews can be viewed.

The Greek, then, was the only one of the three great languages of the Mediterranean to produce a philosophy in any real sense. The Romans did little more than copy the Greeks; the Jews produced none save under Greek tutelage. And it was therefore the Greek intellectualism, with certain Roman and Jewish elements blended into it, that the ancient world bequeathed to the mediæval, and that the mediæ-



val world imposed on the modern. That forms the foundation of culture on which we repose at the present day, a foundation which most of those who stop to consider it at all view from the exclusive standpoint of æsthetics, which they declare to be the solid rock from which alone the higher conceptions of life can spring. But others, looking more closely at the process of historical evolution, might assert that Greek thought penetrated into Europe with the fathers of Nicæa and not with the men of the Renaissance, and from that deduce consequences of a very different character.

With the Greeks, philosophy appeared very early, almost hand in hand with poetry. At first it was merely the effort of a highly endowed race to understand the phenomena of nature and to state them in general terms. This mode of thought flourished until about the end of the fifth century before Christ, when it rapidly developed and crystallized into something more definite and systematic. Leaving their more naturalistic and tentative modes of thought, — to which, curiously enough, we are now tending to return, — the Greek thinkers attached themselves to metaphysical doctrines of the individual and the universe, to a methodology of human experience; three great stages in the process of development, being marked by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (425–322 B.C.). Socrates may stand for free thought, as he was sent to his death under an accusation of atheism; Plato may stand for the imaginative, the poetic conceptions, that the Greek mind, with him, blended into its



philosophy; Aristotle is the codifier who fixed Greek speculation and gave all subsequent philosophy an almost inevitable starting point.

To view the Greek language and thought, for in practice the two are not separable, as voiced by Aristotle, is first to note the utter disproportion between their splendidly developed resources, unrivalled within thousands of miles east or west, and their setting, that of little city states like Athens and Sparta. The language had become imperial, yet its dominion was still parochial; the time was ripe for breaking out beyond the narrow bounds of the Ægean world and for establishing its intellectual empire over humanity. And this was what Aristotle's pupil, the great Alexander, accomplished. But unfortunately the Greek language was ripe; it had crystallized, lost its early fluidity and vigour. So that although the conquests of Alexander suddenly carried it to the Indus and the Nile, and gave Greek domination over the East, there were few elements of growth left in it, and those mostly decadent and morbid, as will appear later. These elements of decay are traceable even in the work of Aristotle.

Languages in their youth are like children, ever discovering new words and new ideas, and from the new words building up new ideas, and from the new ideas seeking for new words. And then after a while the process ceases; the words and the ideas have reached their limit, and have become closely fitted to one another. In other terms, national thought is clothed with a set of word formulas beyond which it



finds it well-nigh impossible to proceed. With ideas and words belonging to such material objects as a shoe, a nail, a chair, there arises no particular difficulty. If under an economic spur civilization develops greater material complexity, almost any language, even a decayed or debased one, is capable of the effort of coining the necessary new word that conveys the idea of the new object; Archimedes invents the screw, and the new word is inevitably found. But there are words which convey abstract ideas, words which the Greeks succeeded in coining, and which when once coined tend to fix ideas and to render it difficult to add to or subtract from them. Space, beauty, time, truth, justice, being, — are such words, and it was with them and similar idea formulas that Aristotle reduced the Greek philosophy to a system, static in its definition, and stamped that system on European thought.

A great effort to systematize ideas coinciding with the moment at which a highly intellectual race had fully developed a wonderful language, could only result, as it did, in making of these word ideas as nearly as possible an absolute and immutable foundation of thought. It is true that Aristotle had a grasp of the evolutionary doctrine, yet it found but slight expression in his works, and his followers soon established fixed values for such abstractions as truth, justice, beauty. It hardly seems necessary at the present day to point out how completely this distorts every view of life; yet for the sake of clearness let us take a single peep at the fundamental fallacy, as it may be



demonstrated with beauty, beauty in nature, beauty in art.

Beauty has a shifting value and not a fixed quantity. Imagine the most perfect of lovely sunsets. You exclaim that this represents the most transcendent beauty of nature. But let us say that nature performs a miracle, does the impossible, and repeats this same sunset, night after night, week after week, month after month. Is that sunset, unchanging and so often repeated, so supremely beautiful as that other one which your imagination has now begun to long for, with just that little alteration in the hues, or in the streaking of the clouds, that will give you the tinge of surprise, of change, of novelty? In other words, is beauty a fixed value, or a complex, shifting one? Convert this into terms of art. Does generation after generation adore Rafael and neglect Botticelli; adore Botticelli and neglect Velasquez; adore Velasquez and neglect Whistler? The same condition applies here as with Nature's masterpieces, and beauty again escapes our power of absolute definition. So it is with justice, truth, being, and other abstract ideas. And there is the point where Greek philosophy failed, and that has only of late been grasped, hesitatingly by the relativist and evolutionist thinkers, more firmly still by the advanced philosophers of our own day.

After Aristotle, Greek philosophy branches into two well-marked channels. Along one of them successive schools ring the changes on the Aristotelian formulas, becoming slowly but surely mere jugglers in words; so that three hundred years later, when



Jesus was born and Alexandria had become the leading Greek city, her philosophers were chiefly concerned with verbal interpretations and the clothing of words in allegorical raiment, with hair-splitting distinctions and threadbare differences. This is perhaps somewhat overstating the case, but there will be occasion to look into the matter more closely a little later.

Along the other and better channel Greek philosophy began to concern itself with life, and in an age in which very ancient social and political customs were rapidly crumbling away, soon flew violently to extreme doctrines, of austerity with the Stoics and of indulgence with the Epicureans.

This decadent epoch, between the death of Aristotle and the birth of Jesus, was marked by the conquest of the East by Alexander, and by the founding of the great Greek monarchies which, after his death, controlled Macedonia, Asia Minor, Babylonia, Persia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Over this vast stretch the Greek language triumphed; its classic tragedies were played in the valley of the Indus; its rhetoric penetrated to Italy, whence Rome was soon to stretch her hand out over the East. Greek became the language of universal culture, to remain so almost to our own day; while her philosophy was to throw off some late shoots in Asia and Egypt, that were to flower with a new religion.



## CHAPTER II

### BEFORE THE CAPTIVITY OF BABYLON

WHAT were the conditions of Jewish thought while Rome and Greece were developing along the lines just indicated? Very different, and very peculiar: in its greater antiquity; in its almost exclusively religious character; in its narrowness; and in its inspiration.

The antiquity of Jewish thought in its literary expression affords a priceless view of the early stages of Jewish history. Had we anything so ancient concerning the Greeks, we should know all that we can now only conjecture about the wanderings of these Pelasgian tribes in the Danubian countries, their push through the Balkans to the Ægean Sea, their development into city states. All this is a blank in Greek history, while the corresponding phase of Jewish history is to some extent revealed. We see the patriarchal tribes in the nomadic state, drifting like the desert sand into Egypt, where doubtless they took on more settled habits and acquired something of Egyptian ideas and customs; then, under the spur of harsh treatment, dashing back into the desert again, and after another period of nomadic life striking at Palestine for a permanent settlement. It was after this settlement that their literature came into existence under the guise of the first books of the Old Testament.



Of the Old Testament as a whole the following general statements may be advanced. The books of the Pentateuch, or of Moses, make up the early stage of the Jewish literature, of which the date stretches back uncertainly as far as and perhaps beyond 800 B.C. Then followed, over about three centuries, the mass of the historical and prophetic books, Nehemiah slightly antedating Plato. Additions to these books were made from the sixth to the third century, when the accepted Hebrew canon of the Old Testament was becoming fixed. Yet Jewish literature continued to flourish, though past its golden age. Prophetic writing continued, the ecclesiastical code known as the Talmud gradually came into existence from the first century B.C., and alongside of this direct continuation of the older movement, more imaginative writing appeared. And the conquest of Asia by the Greeks introduced a new and powerful influence.

Controversies have long raged over the early Jewish writings, but here they must be as far as possible avoided. Whether Moses did or did not write any part of the Pentateuch, whether its date is nearer 800 or 1300 B.C., whether the Levitical law was or was not the foundation of these books, may be left to Biblical specialists to decide; here the question must rather be, what is there in the Pentateuch and in the Prophetic writings peculiar to the Jews, and what is there in them merely characteristic of an early stage of civilization? Of these two questions it will be easier to begin by dealing with the latter.

Like the religion of Greece and of Rome, that of the



Jews rests on a foundation of primitive beliefs and nature cults almost universal among men. Notwithstanding the opposite views of the writers of the Jewish sacred books, their pages contain the involuntary record of such things. Scholars have traced these primitive features in numerous details, and all that need be said here is that behind the gradually formed conception of the single invisible deity Jehovah there was a vast background of primitive nature worship, that shaded insensibly into the Semitic cults that surrounded the Jewish Jehovah with a pagan atmosphere as long as the Jews subsisted in Palestine.

Again, we have a characteristically primitive idea, to be found in all early religions, in the anthropomorphic character of the Jewish God. His lengthy conversations with Adam or with Moses, his naïvely human motives, are as unconvincing of divinity to the modern mind as the quaint representations imagined by early Italian or Flemish artists. A comparison of the anthropomorphism of the Jews with that of the Greeks will throw light on the whole subject. The Greek gods are also naïvely human, peculiarly so in their frailty. But as Greek literature moves from its primitive to its ripe epoch they become idealized in terms of imaginative poetry, of romance, of rhetorical beauty, while the religious emotions of the high intellectual classes, unsatisfied with this glut of æstheticism, turn away from it towards the abstract conceptions of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, or seek to frame a rule of life according to the formulas of Zeno or Epicurus. With the Jews something



quite different occurred. Such imaginative quality as their language possessed was kept strictly within the bounds of religion. And this was due not only to the peculiarly rigid character of the language, but also to the fact that its literary use was highly restricted. To understand this, one must picture the occupation of Palestine by the Jews a little closely. At the time of the Jewish Conquest there was already in Palestine a settled population, closely akin in race, that was exterminated only in part,—the Jebusites and others. They had civilized habits, even considerable cities, like Jerusalem. The Jews came among them as conquerors, and the tribes divided the country into tracts for occupation. They then entered what was apparently a semi-pastoral, semi-city state; at all events it is clear that a good many Jews took up their abode in the city of Jerusalem with the Jebusites: “As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.” (Joshua xv, 63.)

Now among these warrior-pastoral tribes, only just beginning to turn towards city life and conditions, there was one disrupted tribe, and in that tribe one family, the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron, that stood in a peculiar situation. According to the Jewish legends, at the time of their flight from Egypt, — a difficult crisis, — the tribes were driven, by force of circumstances and by their leaders, towards a more national organization. Moses, of the tribe of Levi, became chief of the combined tribes; he central-



ized a new religious organization in the hands of his brother Aaron, making the High Priesthood hereditary in his family; and when Palestine was reached, the Levites, instead of obtaining a tribal tract, were scattered among the cities, and were specially marked off for the priesthood, a very acute move of theocratic and centralizing statesmanship. Even allowing for the fact that the Biblical account of these matters is in large part retrospective, it may be fairly said that one tribe showed peculiar development, towards religion, towards city life, towards intellectualism; and that tribe acquired, perhaps from the seventh century, the mission of leading the others on the road of homogeneous nationalism under the banner of religion. It was from this, in large measure, that the second period of Jewish literature, that of the great prophetic books, derived its character. And with prophetism we are brought face to face with the question of inspiration and particularly of the miraculous, a question it will be necessary to consider before proceeding further.

It is possible to distinguish several broad currents of opinion in the matter of miracles, — using the word in the plain dictionary sense. And it is almost needless to point out that the most widespread was this, that the miracles of Jesus were the fundamental proof of his divinity. A rationalizing age, the eighteenth century, concentrated its attack on this point, arguing about this central proposition, that if the miracle is within human experience, then it is within human means, or that the evidence for the impossi-



ble is less credible than the credulity and consequent error of its reporter. But as Europe emerged from the throes of the French Revolution into the nineteenth century, as a wave of religious revival and the study of history progressed side by side, the question gradually got itself restated in somewhat broader terms. The more the Bible and profane history were explored, the more it became clear that miracles were not peculiar to Jesus, were not even peculiar to Christianity, or to any country, or age; they belonged to all ages from the most remote to the present, and to certain forms of Buddhism or Mohammedanism just as they did to Christianity; they represented in fact a variety of universal historical statement or psychological experience. And the opponents of Christianity shifted their ground accordingly, and now said, and to-day still say: if Aaron, and Paul, and St. Francis, and if Buddha and Mohammed, and if Indian jugglers, and Mormon elders, and Mrs. Eddy, and Notre Dame de Lourdes have performed miracles, then the miracles of Jesus are not otherwise significant. Or else they deny the miraculous in toto. But even these lines of thought are not wholly profitable, are fit only for argumentators, not for those whose sole desire is to see reality at the closest quarters possible. That is the effort that must now be made.

The quite real difficulty, the elusiveness of miracles, that is of incidents contrary to normal experience, depends partly on the extremely doubtful character of the evidence one has to deal with, on the



constant factor of legend and credulity, and partly on the extremely variable psychology of those acted on by the miracle, whether directly as participants, or indirectly through tradition. On the question of credibility what is clear to all who have dealt with historical evidence, is that the proof for the great mass of recorded miracles is, on the face of it, absolutely inadequate to sustain them. Some are purely mythical. Others evidently refer to feats of common jugglery, well known through all the ages. Some are merely pious exaggerations or distortions. Some are legends that scholarship can attach to a basis of folklore. A great part of the Jewish mythology was of foreign origin, mostly Babylonian; thus its account of the flood is an international myth, very probably based, so far as the Jews were concerned, on some actual, but very remote occurrence, in the valley of the Euphrates. Searching in another direction we find miracles merging into well-defined jugglery, — as in the legendary account of Aaron casting down the rod that turns into a serpent, to which the Egyptian magicians reply by performing the same trick.

How far trickery may, in some cases, be taken as a line of explanation, it is impossible to determine. The evidence on which the Biblical incidents repose is far too slight and unprecise to admit of trenchant decisions. Yet it is abundantly clear that from a remote epoch the country between India and the Mediterranean has produced, and is still producing, a class of men ranging from the common fakir who for a few coins will make the mango grow and the cobra dance,



to the ascetic in whom the fakir almost, perhaps entirely, merges into an individual of abnormal self-concentration, developed intuitions, and extraordinary powers of suggestion. His tricks, not to call them miracles, are in a way legitimate demonstrations of abnormal powers; and if they baffle the critical observations of present-day observers, how much more must they have impressed those of remote and less sophisticated ages.

It is at this point, however, that the miraculous deserves serious attention. To whatever extent we may sweep away the marvels of the sacred books and of later ages, as jugglery or as legend, as folklore or as pure deception, no reasonable person can doubt that a residuum is left, just as no reasonable person can doubt that at the present day many of the facts of what we call abnormal psychology transcend the range of accepted human experience. In other words, the expression miraculous, used reasonably, is to be placed in connection with phenomena of abnormal psychology, and this takes us directly back to prophetism and religious inspiration.

The psychological interpretation of man tends at the present day to become less sharply individual than in preceding centuries during which the doctrine of the resurrection of the body prevailed in its most rigid form. Even to-day an exaggerated idea of the unity and isolation of the individual prevails in the Western world. Yet in the purely physical sense it is clear enough that the body is but a continuous and changing collection of matter, held together



by a fleeting and mysterious individualism. May we not imagine something rather similar as to what may be called the ethereal nature of man, — a constant flowing in and flowing out to this individual centre of that imponderable ether, which science will perhaps soon link with ponderable matter in a single formula? If so, what do we get as a result? That man is bound to man by subtle layers of all-pervasive ether, which actually whirls into matter within him and within his neighbour, which may accord two brains thousands of miles apart to instantaneous flashes of identical thought, and which may mould the emotions of a large gathering to curious harmonies. The eye may play a part as yet unsuspected in the human machine, and is, at all events, the organ that comes most obviously into play in those conditions of concentration that induce suggestion, — the keying of two minds. Concentration and introspection, meditation and fasting and prayer, the suggesting and the suggestible condition, religious emotion and religious inspiration, these were the conditions that might produce the miracle in a suitable surrounding, and that helped to produce the long line of Jewish prophets.

And it is the prophets that placed a distinctive mark on the Jewish literature of the golden age. While Greece developed her splendid drama, her poetry and her philosophy, and Athens fought Sparta for the dominion of the Aegean Sea, the Jews went through vicissitudes that might have overwhelmed them as a nation had not the Levitical priesthood



and tradition stood firm. From their entry into Palestine as desert tribes until the year 586, — the epoch of Solon's legislation at Athens, — the Jews gradually lost their tribal organization and nomad propensities. They formed kingdoms, — that of Solomon, about the year 1000, extending for a brief period over all the Jews and many subject people; they became agriculturists and city people; and they had short spells of national success. Yet on the whole they failed, from lack of numbers, from lack of cohesion, and from lack of topographical advantages. Their country was open, and had powerful neighbours north, south and east, who periodically invaded it; the original population of Palestine was great in numbers, and such fusion as took place was slow; the only element of cohesion, save for the temporary successes of the monarchy, lay in the Jewish religious caste, the priests of Levi, their tradition and their preaching. Finally, in 586, came what appeared to be a final catastrophe. Jerusalem and its Temple were overthrown, its inhabitants were reduced to slavery and driven to the Babylonian captivity.

There are few things in human history more extraordinary than the tenacity, the alternation of doggedness and blazing fury, with which the Levitical caste clung to its high faith during these struggles. Not that that faith remained a constant throughout. Like all human beliefs and institutions it went through a well defined evolution. Yet certain fundamental characteristics remained. The God of Israel



was their sole god, and though some of the neighbouring gods, Baal or Melkart, approached this isolation, yet the Levite faith was more markedly monotheistic than any other. Jehovah was not only exclusively Jewish, not interested in, or hostile to any other nation, but he was exclusively god, — a jealous and narrow god, the god of the desert tribes, ever ready to smite.

As was the case in other Semite cults, the god also concerned himself, from very early times, with legislation, and gave to that legislation an ethical or religious turn. But all the efforts of the Levites were needed to draw the mass of the Jews from their primitive nature cults and to keep them from the Semitic gods of Palestine. For century after century the priesthood struggled in vain to hold the nation to the call of Jehovah. The cult of Baal and Moloch, of Tammuz and of other deities more comfortable than Jehovah, could not be repressed. At no time before 586 does it appear that the Jews accepted the exclusive cult of Jehovah with any unanimity, unless Solomon succeeded in imposing it during his reign. On the contrary, the cult of Jehovah survived only after a terrible struggle. The Temple of Jerusalem was overthrown; more than once kings or queens introduced strange gods; the Jewish priests were dispossessed and driven into obscurity. Yet through all these vicissitudes they clung defiantly to their faith. And their eventual triumph was due to the fact that their religious books were the only national literature, that they were persistent, and that at intervals they produced individuals possessed with inspiration



who prophesied and awoke the echoes of individual and national conscience.

From Moses to Mohammed, a space of two thousand years, from Mohammed to the Mahdi, a space of thirteen hundred more, the Semitic race, centred on Arabia, has produced individuals of the prophetic type, some reputed true, others false, one shading into the other by subtle and elusive gradations. Among these prophets, those of the Bible, from the legendary Moses down to Paul, form a well-defined group, knit together by the strong tradition of the Jewish faith and literature. And yet Paul cannot be thought of in the same terms as Moses, for Paul came later, into changed conditions; and it is with the others as with Paul, they belong to diverse epochs, diverse circumstances, and so act diversely. Their categories may be chronologically stated as follows: (1) the early prophets, judges and kings of remote or legendary times; (2) the prophets whose writings have been directly preserved from about 800 to 586 B.C. ; (3) the prophets of the post-captivity period; (4) Jesus; (5) Paul.

The prophets of the second period, — and the greatest were Isaiah and Jeremiah, — represent the culmination of all the previous efforts of the race. On the positive side they have the intensity, inspiration, devotion and wrath with which they surround the cult of Jehovah. At times, especially with Jeremiah, the concentration and directness of their language is touched with metaphor, and rises to a great height: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain



of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! . . . Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up." They struggle for an ethical conception of life. They have visions of a happier day when Judah and Israel shall rise again under the protection of Jehovah. They prophesy a Jewish king who should revive the monarchy of David and Solomon, a prophecy constantly misapplied in later times to Jesus, and that in point of fact only John Maccabæus, or Ezra, came near realizing. On the negative side may be noted the intensely national character of their deity, a god of wrath as he was many centuries before in the desert, preoccupied solely with the interests of his chosen people. And it is in that particular that the greatest change was preparing. Let us leave Jeremiah heaping ashes on his head and invectives on his people, as he sat mid the ruins of the gates of Jerusalem, and turn to Babylon, where the captive Jews were learning the lessons of adversity and also enlarging their point of view. For the epoch of narrow tribalism had been brought to a close by their catastrophe, and that of nationalism, even of internationalism or humanity, was dawning.



## CHAPTER III

### FROM THE CAPTIVITY TO CHRIST

THE era of the Babylonian Captivity is a convenient one for surveying the general progress of the world. In the Mediterranean the small city states of the Hellenes were formed and already rising to prosperity. Italy as yet showed little beyond semi-tribal states with a tinge of Greek colonization, speaking dialects not destined to survive; Roman history had not begun. Egypt remained stagnant, as for many centuries before, more or less concentrated along the banks of the Nile, dense, civilized, but local and non-expansive. It was to the east, along the three great rivers of southwestern Asia that civilization was painfully dragging its feet furthest along the thorny path of progress. In the valleys of the Euphrates, of the Indus, and of the Ganges, man was learning to build empires and to found creeds, to break down national barriers, to preach larger doctrines, to perceive wider horizons.

A few dates will serve for an outline. In the valley of the Euphrates for many centuries two Semitic states had struggled for supremacy, Babylonia and Assyria. For considerable periods one or the other asserted its supremacy; yet for the purpose of the present generalization it will not be unfair to say that it is only from the time of Sargon, who was



king of Assyria from B.C. 722 to 705, that the tendency towards the formation of a great Euphratic empire becomes clear. From 722 to 538, the world witnessed tremendous struggles between the two states in which eventually the neighbouring Aryan races of the Persian plateau became involved; until finally the conquest of Babylon by the Persian king Cyrus marked the end of the Semitic kingdoms and the successful establishment of the Persian Empire. This huge monarchy rapidly stretched itself out from the Caspian Sea to the high waters of the Nile, and from the Greek cities of Ionia to the valley of the Indus.

The effect of the establishment of the Persian monarchy has not been sufficiently emphasized in history. It is the obvious defect of our histories of ancient times, in part arising from necessity, that they are based on literary studies. If Greek is the greatest of ancient languages, and Thucydides the greatest of Greek historians, then the incidents that Thucydides wrote about are magnified into the central aspect of ancient history; the distortion is now obvious enough and ridiculous. Ancient history should not concern itself about the petty struggles of the Greek cities until it has at least attempted to measure events to the scale of the great sixth and fourth centuries, of the great Persian and Greek empires; that done, the rest will readily fall into its proper place and become vastly more intelligible. Unfortunately, however, Persia produced no Thucydides, and although archæology has in slight measure filled the gap, yet it must be largely a matter of historical inference to



estimate the work accomplished by the monarchy of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes.

There was a religious work. The Persian cults became more or less dominant among the higher classes of the valley of the Euphrates, where hitherto the Semitic deities had formed a Pantheon curiously blending astronomical science with nature worship. In some respects the local religion prevailed: "The Semitic astrology, the monstrous offspring of long-continued scientific observations, became superimposed on the nature myths of the Persians."<sup>1</sup> At the close of the preceding century Persia, then only a hill state beyond the Median borders, had witnessed a great religious movement. Zoroaster, a dim figure that some scholars have recently attempted to date as far down as the close of the seventh century,<sup>2</sup> had organized and stimulated the ancient Persian beliefs. Legend had rapidly formed about his career on orthodox mythological lines, and ascribed his miraculous birth to a Virgin mother. At thirty he had begun his ministry, and at the very outset was tempted by demons who offered him a kingdom to renounce his faith. Piercing behind these characteristic legends, for which parallels in the lives of Buddha and Jesus will readily be found, we can dimly discern in Zoroaster a great religious organizer, a figure part legendary, and certainly closer akin to Moses than to the great ethical teachers Buddha and Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> Cumont, *Mystères de Mithra*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> According to Jackson he died about the time of the Captivity; but this seems doubtful.



The most permanent results of the establishment of the Persian cults at Babylon may perhaps best be stated in some such terms as these. It carried towards the West the Persian idea of the conflict between good and evil blended with the notion of the good and evil angels. It shadowed the presence of a supreme and unknowable god, Ahura Mazda, below whom lesser gods came into play within the ken of humanity. Among these gods and the ideas with which they were connected, it is possible that Mithra, the Sun God, was supreme; at all events, the idea of the Sun, and of the radiancy of heaven, of the connection between light and good was very prominent.<sup>1</sup> More will be said of Mithra before long; for the moment it will suffice to state that his later myth was one of the salvation of mankind by the god's redeeming sacrifice, and that his cult was a mystery, restricted to a small group of initiated devotees; nothing seems more likely than that these devotees included the Persian sovereigns; and in any case the rapid growth of the Sun worship and their attachment to it are fairly well established facts. Even if the cult of Mithra remained for a time inconspicuous, the few who thought, the isolated intellects scattered here and there began to catch sight, behind all the fables and externals of national cults, Persian, or Babylonian, or Jewish, of the wider idea of a supreme, indefinite, unintelligible and universal Deity.

<sup>1</sup> There seems to be little to support Cumont's opinion as to the importance of the Mithra cult as far back as the sixth century B.C.



The Persian Empire lasted for about two centuries. During that time it internationalized a stretch of Asia about as large as the United States and perhaps as populous, creating economic, social and administrative intercourse and movement; breaking down to some extent race prejudice and creating religious tolerance. Almost suddenly travel became possible from one border of the empire to the other, so that one of the early philosophers of Greece could visit India just as that distant land was coming under the spell of its greatest teacher, the Buddha Sakyamuni. It is not certain that Pythagoras, although he travelled extensively within the Persian Empire, was ever in India, but it is quite probable. In any case Indian doctrines found their way into his philosophy, especially that of metempsychosis, which he handed on to Plato.<sup>1</sup> Pythagoras is also believed by some to have studied under the priests at Babylon; while Plato was contemplating a journey to the East in quest of knowledge when he was prevented by the breaking out of the Persian wars.

The dates of Buddha's life are not yet definitely fixed. Pythagoras lived from 582 to 500; Buddha perhaps from 622 to 542, or more probably from 558 to 478; the Babylonian Captivity lasted from 586 to 537, when Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to Pales-

<sup>1</sup> The doctrines of metempsychosis apparently still survive in parts of Syria among the Noseirriyeh; see Miss Bell's *Desert and the Sown*. It is of course impossible to conjecture at what epoch they acquired these beliefs. Clement of Alexandria states that the Zoroastrian doctrines were known in Greece at the time of Plato.



tine. In other words, there is a general coincidence of these dates with that of the creation of the Persian Empire. What is the special significance of Buddha at that precise moment in the history of the world?

India, like Babylonia, had been conquered by Aryan invaders from the north closely akin to the Persians; they developed religious forms characteristic of a transition epoch and resembling in many details those of the Jews. The Vedas were not unlike the sacred records of the Jews, the Brahmans were Levites and Sanskrit, like Hebrew, was a religious language. The Vedanta beliefs, eventually systematized as Brahmanism, were mythological, comporting a numerous array of gods and goddesses and all that this implied; but behind this superficial and popular veil the Hindus, like the Persians, had conceived the Universal Spirit, invisible, all-pervading, without beginning and without end, an object more of contemplation than of ritual. It was when the religion of the Vedas had already become stagnant and overlaid with ritualism that Buddha appeared.

Two things regarding Buddha concern us here: one, the legend; the other, the teaching. The legend is highly wrought, widely diffused. In it Buddha appears a miraculous personage; he is born of a Virgin; he performs endless miracles, and his translation into Nirvana is likewise miraculous. This side of the legend need not be dwelt on further than to note the fact that it more or less repeats the tales associated shortly before this with Zoroaster. But what may be insisted on is the prevalence and long continuance



of these legends about this preëminent man for many centuries, the intense love of the Oriental for stories and allegories, and the long existence of a channel for communicating Indian ideas westward through the empires of the Persians, of Alexander and of the Seleucidæ. This last matter will be dealt with later, as also the rise of Buddhism and its propaganda.

Behind the legend a real man is discernible, a man with a mission to his fellow men. And this mission, unlike that of Zoroaster, is not to enforce the laws of a national deity, not to impose the code of a national priesthood, not to lament or predict national disasters, not to visit wrath on neighbouring nations, but to draw man into gentle self-communion, to make him realize the better side of his complex nature through purity and simplicity of life, to bring him to salvation through individual righteousness. It was that for which Buddha stood. He realized in India what his two great contemporaries east and west, Confucius and Socrates, did not; for they, despairing of national cults, only established modes of thought, while he founded the first great international religion of humanity.

This statement requires some qualification. In Greece, where the religious element was weakest and the philosophic strongest, a similar tendency is manifest in Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato (582-348). But whereas on the eastern side of the Persian Empire the doctrine of humanity was preached within the limits of religion, and after the death of its preacher was rapidly overlaid with formalism, on the western



side it tended otherwise, became even antireligious, as in Socrates. In India it remained the inner core of a cult that still survives; in Greece it was merely an intellectual movement, that became later, after some phases that will have to be noticed, one of the component factors of Christianity. For it must be remembered that if the descent of Paul is in one line from Moses, in another it is from Plato and the Stoics.

The sixth century before Christ, therefore, may fairly be described as one of extraordinary change. The creation of the Persian Empire gave a splendid channel for the circulation of new ideas; and Babylon was the centre of that empire. What wonder is it, then, that the Jewish prophetic books of the period of the Captivity and after, some of them written in Babylon itself, show marked differences from those of the earlier period?

These differences can best be traced in such prophetic books as that of Ezekiel or in such a narrative as that of Jonah. The chief preoccupation of the prophets is still the God and the people of Israel and the sacred city Jerusalem, but it is less narrow, less gloomy; the glories of Babylon illumine the pages, and behind them world empires are in shock. So when Ezekiel is called from among the captives to the prophetic mission, God appears to him in a manner that suggests very strongly the attributes of the Persian Sun God. (Ezek. i, 26-28.)<sup>1</sup> This influence may be open to doubt, but there can be none as to that of the

<sup>1</sup> It must be admitted that this is very hazardous. Although the event happened half a century earlier, there is no difficulty in



Assyrian and Babylonian art. The visions of the Jewish prophets now reflect monstrous creatures, in which wings, eyes, wheels of fire and human-headed animals, revolve in apocalyptic confusion. And the dreadful beast with the iron teeth and the horns with human eyes is inextricably mixed up with a Mithraic stream of heavenly light in which ten thousand times ten thousand Persian angels minister to a supreme deity known no longer as Jehovah but as the Ancient of Days. Politically it is the same. The young men of Israel,—Daniel, Meshach and the others,—become the administrators of the Persian sovereigns, and are loyal to the machine of which they form part. And even in that most important element of change, the rising cult of humanity which we have just labelled with the convenient names of Buddha and Pythagoras, it is possible, though difficult, to detect the spirit of the coming age. It is surely not an exaggeration to say that in the book of Jonah the attitude of the writer towards the pagan inhabitants of Nineveh is nearer to the proselytizing humanity of Paul than to the destructive zealotry of Joshua.

In 537 B.C. Cyrus permitted some 50,000 Jews to migrate back from Babylon to Judæa. Apparently they were the most intensely national kernel of their race, which by this time was largely scattered in Egypt, in the valley of the Euphrates, in Asia Minor. With them were the national and the prophetic traditions. Yet at first their return proved a failure. The mixed

supposing that the text, or this part of it, dates later than 538 B.C. from which time the Persian influence would exist.



races of Judæa proved too strong and began to absorb the exiles. A second party led by Ezra, a favourite of the Emperor Artaxerxes, did better in the following century, and soon afterwards Nehemiah, a Jewish official of the same sovereign, was sent out as Satrap of Judæa. Ezra and Nehemiah succeeded in restoring a semblance of the old Jewish state, under Persian suzerainty. The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt; racial purity was obtained by annulling the marriages of Jews with Gentiles, by rescuing degenerate Jews and housing them in Jerusalem; the Levites were reconstituted. Curious effort of the old desert tribe to reassert its fundamental tribal exclusiveness and force! From this moment that was to be the dominant note at Jerusalem, — a fanatic conservatism, building zealously not for the future but for the past.

The books of Ezra, of Nehemiah, and of the lesser prophets and priests of the epoch reveal this. Their note is less and less inspired, more and more practical. Let us get the Temple rebuilt, Jerusalem reinhabited, our people rescued from Gentile absorption, — these are the dominant thoughts. And with Ezra, in the second half of the fifth century, may be said to begin a new era. For with him we note two well-marked tendencies that rapidly develop later. One is to fix the authority of the Old Testament as a theocratic code of law; the second is to abandon the Hebrew tongue and to use instead Aramaic, the widespread *lingua franca* of the Semitic world. The first means that the period of vitality was making way for that of dogmatism, the second that the Jews were now so



placed in relation to surrounding countries that tribal isolation of speech was hopeless and wide international communication inevitable.

From the epoch of Nehemiah and Ezra for a century or so nothing need delay us. The Roman Republic was now rapidly extending its borders, though it had not yet entered into its conflict with Phœnician Carthage. The Greek cities had repelled the extension of the Persian Empire into Europe, and had then fallen to internecine strife that fatally drained the strength of Sparta, Thebes and Athens, leaving the larger and more backward Macedonian state the supreme military arbiter of the Balkan peninsula. The Persian Empire gradually decayed. Constitutionally feeble, it had fallen into weak hands, and soon tended to break up. The old military vigour of the Persian hill men was sapped by power and internal peace. Premonitory symptoms of collapse appeared at the close of the fifth century, and finally the Macedonian state rose to military efficiency under Philip, and his son Alexander sprang from Europe into Asia and shattered the Persian Empire to dust at the battles of the Granicus, Issus, and Arbela (334-331 B.C.).

Here again, as in the sixth century, we have a revolution in the history of mankind. It is no longer a Persian dynasty that rules from the Indus to the sea of Marmora, but a Greek. The people are the same, Semites and Aryans, speaking many dialects, worshipping many gods; but the dominant caste has gone, and that means the substitution of Greek for Persian influence. But in 331 B.C. Greek culture had already



developed that full flower which the thinkers, artists and idealists of all subsequent ages have continued to admire, to copy, to place on the supreme pedestal. Persian culture had done none of these things; its only point of superiority was religious. The result quickly appeared. The conquest of Alexander and the rule of his successors hellenized the East, in government, in art, in intellectualism. The architecture of Greece spread its splendid forms over Asia Minor and Syria, and extended its influence thousands of miles to the east; the Attic drama penetrated to India and central Asia, and probably enough thence to far-away China; the language of Demosthenes and Aristotle became the sole medium of government and of culture, while the Semitic Aramaic or Aryan Persian remained merely untutored local dialects.<sup>1</sup> And as an incident of this process Greek came into contact with Hebrew.

It seems clear that during the epoch that followed the conquest of Alexander the population increased rapidly. There was economic, commercial development. The ancient policy of planting colonies, which the Persians had practised, became very extensive. Planting a colony might have two objects: one, to weaken a nation by removing from its midst some of its most active elements; the other, to make of the colony, a nucleus of support for the central government. During the Hellenistic period, between the time of Alexander and that of Christ, Asia Minor and Syria

<sup>1</sup> For those who like modern instances the relation of French to Flemish and Walloon in Belgium may be cited.



were dotted thickly with Greek cities and Greek colonies; while the Jews, whose scattering had begun long before the period of Alexander, were almost as widely distributed — influential and highly intelligent communities in most cities of any importance.

There is another broad aspect of the epoch that must not be omitted. The Greek influence was purely negative in the religious sense; but very fruitful in the philosophising sense. So far as religion was concerned there were superficial changes; the old cults changed little below the surface, though they largely adopted a hellenized exterior, — an exterior of language and of æstheticism. But those people of the empire who had perceived behind the cult of Mithra, or of Jehovah or of other gods, the light of the universal and unknowable deity, were not directly attacked in a belief which the philosophers of Greece had already accepted. Within a remote corner of the new empire, in the upper valley of the Indus, the legend and doctrine of Buddha had now gathered strength. And one century later, when Antiochus the Great ruled from the Indus to Jerusalem, Buddhism came to its official triumph.

There is a curious even if non-significant parallelism between the history of the first three centuries of Buddhism and of Christianity. In both cases there was the humble start from the small group of apostles left behind, then three centuries of obscure struggle, persecution and comparative insignificance, and lastly the conversion of a mighty emperor, with sudden dominion following. It was the great Indian em-



peror Asoka who did for Buddhism what Constantine was to do for Christianity. He suddenly found faith and supported the creed he had hitherto persecuted. He made Buddhism his state religion. He called a great Buddhist council; and under his auspices numerous missionaries were sent out to propagate the faith both within India and without. All this was happening during the close of a reign that lasted from 260 to 223 B.C.

Unfortunately we know far less of the spread of Indian influence westward than of Greek influence eastward. But if the matter is looked at reasonably, there is some ground for conjecturing that Buddhist influence may have gone further than is usually supposed. For the historical evidence as to those times is mostly archæological and only to a slight extent documentary. But the evidence of archæology is the evidence of architecture and inscriptions, which, as Greek culture was predominant, could not and did not take on an Indian character. Noble ruins still testify that Greece expressed her artistic emotions in granite and marble, but there are none to bear witness to those deeper movements of the conscience that spread from India westward. For does it follow, from the supremacy of Greek æstheticism and language, that among the great masses of the East, whose literature was the traveller's tale, whose architecture was the mud hovel or camel's hair tent, whose religious emotions were already strongly tinged by the conception of the universal god, the ideas of Buddhism did not make their way? And by the ideas



of Buddhism is meant the legend of the miracles, the ideal of asceticism and purity, the individual teaching of a doctrine of humanity under a supreme deity. Such hypotheses are bound to be shadowy, and yet it is impossible to leave them out of account. And this attempt to see the possible Buddhistic component in the soil out of which Christianity was to spring may best be closed by a definite fact. After Asoka the next great epoch of Buddhistic effort came precisely as Christianity was forming. The Emperor Kanishka, whose rule extended from Delhi to the Caspian and who lived from 15 B.C. to 45 A.D., was the greatest supporter of Buddhism after Asoka. Under his auspices another great Buddhistic council was summoned in the Punjab, and the faith which the missionaries had already carried well-nigh to the Caspian two centuries before, received a new propagandist impetus.<sup>1</sup> And it may be noted that there was at least one strong line of communication between the largest Jewish centre of that time and India. For a trade route ran from the mouth of the Indus to Alexandria, in which city were Indian merchants who became quite an important part of the community towards the close of the first century A.D.

Turning now to the political changes of the period, let us see how the Jews of Palestine were affected by the Greek conquest. In 332 Jerusalem was quietly

<sup>1</sup> The Buddhist sacred books were not reduced to writing until about a hundred years before Christ. The working of oral tradition may therefore be assumed to have been very strong at least up to that moment.



transferred from the dominion of Darius to that of Alexander. The Greek monarch was prepared to accept all religions and to respect all local customs; he aroused no antagonisms. After the death of Alexander, Jerusalem was so placed as to become an object of strife between two of the kingdoms erected by his successors, that of the Seleucids and that of the Ptolemies. An interesting new epoch opened that lasted until 167 B.C.; it was marked by striking events in the field of politics, and in that of Hebrew thought.

The unfortunate situation of Jerusalem, on a line of shock between two great states, was never more acutely felt than during this epoch. The Ptolemies and the Seleucids were continually at war; Palestine was continually harried. As early as 320 B.C. there came a great siege of Jerusalem, as a result of which 100,000 of her people were carried captive to Egypt, largely to help build up Alexandria, the new metropolis of the Greek world. From this bad start even worse followed. For one hundred and fifty years the storms kept breaking over the city and by the beginning of the second century it had been reduced very low indeed.

At this moment Rome was just emerging from her death struggle with Carthage. Almost without an instant's pause she turned her formidable legions eastward, beginning the long struggle against the Greek monarchies that was to terminate with the disaster of Kleopatra and Antony at Actium in 31 B.C. As the defeated Hannibal fled towards the East, Jerusalem was under the power of Antiochus III,



greatest of the Seleucid sovereigns. He had succeeded in reëstablishing to its furthest limits the inheritance of his ancestors, reducing the Persians to vassalage and ruling as far east as the Punjab; but the close of his reign saw him give refuge to the suppliant Hannibal, anger Rome, meet her armies in Thessaly, and suffer ruinous defeat. From that moment he and his successors were severely pressed by the great republic of the West, and that pressure involved raising larger and larger revenues. His grandson, Antiochus Epiphanes, became involved in a taxpaying struggle with his Jewish subjects, and perhaps ascribing to religious causes their reluctance to meet his collectors, he outlawed the cult of Jehovah, destroyed the altars, defiled the Temple, persecuted the priests, and attempted to force Greek rites on them. This resulted in the revolt of Mattathias Maccabæus, and in the reëstablishment, for a while, of an independent Jewish state.

Greek culture had preceded Greek conquest. The sudden assertion of Greek political influence over the East by the hoplites and mail-clad cavalry of Alexander had long been prepared by deeper acting causes. Yet this political influence reacted powerfully and immediately on the cultural, and no more remarkable result of this reaction is to be found than that on the Hebrew sacred literature. The tide of prophetic production ceased to flow. The canon of the Old Testament was virtually closed; and the rapid draining off of the Jewish people to Egypt soon made the new Alexandria a greater Jewish city than Jerusalem



itself. It was at Alexandria, at the beginning of the third century, that the canon of the Old Testament was translated into Greek (275-150 B.C.), to supply the hellenized Jews of Egypt with an intelligible text; this was the famous version known as the Septuagint. From this moment the Hebrew language may be considered extinct as a living force. Aramaic is the *patois* of Judæa; Greek is the international and cultured language; Hebrew is merely a sacred or learned tongue. And a great landmark in history is reached when the conjunction of Greek and Hebrew takes place, when a considerable part of the Jewish people accept the language of Greece, through which, three centuries later, they will infuse their own religious thought into the Mediterranean world.

One word more of Alexandria. Another of the fundamental distortions which ancient history presents concerns this great city. The impression is left that its importance was less than that of Athens or of Rome. The fact is questionable. Athens prospered politically for only a hundred years, and never equalled Alexandria in size. Rome flourished about five hundred years. But Alexandria saw almost uninterrupted prosperity for nearly a thousand years; and during a great part of that time was the centre of Mediterranean culture.

From the period of the Septuagint to that of Christ it is now possible to summarize the history of the Jews in a few rapid strokes. Their literature or culture flows in two streams, one hellenized, the other not. As to the former it is mainly to be found in the



apocryphal books of the Old Testament that date largely from the second and first centuries before Christ, and that were gradually translated from the original Hebrew, or Aramaic, into the Greek version of the Septuagint. Whether historical in type, like the books of the Maccabees, or literary and fabulous like the book of Bel and the Dragon, they reflect the spirit of a new age; there is little in them to recall the utterance of Isaiah or Jeremiah. On the other hand, there had been, ever since the return from the Captivity, a tendency among the priestly caste, first to reduce the books and traditions into an accepted code, and that once accomplished, to comment, interpret, and expand out from it a system of theocratic law. These were the elements, derived largely from the Old Testament, out of which the Talmud grew, and that gave a particular character to Judaism shortly before the time of Christ. But this is outstripping the date, 167 B.C., which was the point at which we left the Jewish remnant, crushed yet unconquerable, rising under the leadership of Mattathias Maccabæus against the Seleucid power.

With Rome knocking at the gates of the East, the moment was propitious for the Jews. Under the Maccabean princes they succeeded in reëntering and holding Jerusalem. They formed alliances with the Romans, and rested their power internally on the priests and learned men, whom they formed into the Sanhedrin, a council presided by the High Priest. The Maccabean line, known as that of the Asmonean princes, lasted over a century, but its



last years were marked by internal dissensions and civil war that led to Roman intervention. In 54 B.C. Crassus plundered the Temple. The Asmonean line came to an end shortly afterwards, and was followed by that of the Idumæan princes; Herod getting possession of Jerusalem, with Roman help, in 37 B.C. This cruel tyrant, a Jew in religion only, not in race, remained the successful despot of Judæa until the year 4 B.C., the reputed date of the birth of Jesus. At his death, although his kingdom was divided among his sons, Palestine was rapidly becoming something more than a Roman protectorate, and before long Jerusalem passed under the direct control of Roman officials.

During this period the power of the Sanhedrin had apparently grown; at all events, the spirit that lay behind it had become the chief characteristic of the Jews. The remnant of Jerusalem had now for nucleus a group of learned men, scribes, doctors in the Law of Israel. And these doctors were in a very similar condition to those of the Greeks, as to whom much will have to be said presently; they were pedants, interpreters of texts, disputators, theological hairsplitters. They were no longer prophets, only experts in dogmatic literature. But that literature was sacred and the Sanhedrin administered justice; so woe betide him whose creed did not come within the correct interpretation of the Law.

In sharp contrast stood all that surrounded the Jews. All about that tough kernel of national theism, so pure, so intolerant, so unconquerable, the intel-



lectualism and emotionalism of the Mediterranean people had been reduced to cataclysmic flux. Near the seat of the Jewish Law there was protest against its formalism and aridity, seeking expression in Hebraic unorthodoxy. And scattered through the Roman world, there were also individual rebels, often enough followers of the philosophy of Zeno. But for the most part, in Asia and Egypt, even in Rome and Greece, there was no purity and no intolerance, nothing but concession based on denationalization and demoralization, or an atrocious blend of universal superstition with universal scepticism. Asia had fallen into religious anarchy, save where the Persian Sun God shed a feeble but increasing illumination. He alone, in any of his numerous forms, seemed to figure a divine supremacy and to foreshadow a positive dogma for mankind. As Horus or Attis, as Adonis, or Mithra, or Apollo, the cult of the Sun fringed the Mediterranean Sea. As the god of redemption and self-sacrifice, by his death and resurrection, he evoked the doctrine of the original sin of man and of his eventual liberation. These outstanding ideas associated with the redeemer Sun God will be dealt with in more detail later; for the moment it must suffice to state that they were spread broadcast among the Semitic, Persian, Egyptian and Greek populations that filled with their varied cults, customs and dialects the great triangle between the Nile, the Caspian and the Ægean.

But within a much narrower zone, close about the city of Jerusalem, were conditions even more pregnant for the future. The hardening of Jewish re-



ligious life had not been effected without evoking some resistance. On the surface Jewish thought appeared to belong to two categories only, as represented by two great sects: the Sadducees, priestly aristocrats, whose law and theology were conservative, always looking back towards the Pentateuch; the Pharisees, more democratic and popular, champions of the newer Law and of national progress, believers in certain dogmas not to be found in the ancient canon, — the future life and the immortality of the soul. But beyond the city gates, especially among the humbler classes of the Jews, the case was different. In the valley of Jordan, in Galilee, by the banks of the Dead Sea, communities arose with rites condemned at Jerusalem and with virtues not often practised there. They grafted on to the old Jewish theology the idea of the redeemer god; they practised his fraternal communion supper; they believed in charity, purity and humility. Unfortunately, little is known about them, but clearly their influence was felt even in the high rabbinical circles of Jerusalem. For it may be noted that in the reign of the Maccabean King Alexander (103–76 B.C.), who fiercely enforced orthodoxy, the learned rabbi Joshua ben Parahiyah fled for the sake of conscience from Jerusalem to Alexandria. He was accompanied by his disciple Jesus, who eventually returned to Palestine, there, according to the Talmud, to found a sect of unorthodox Jews.



## CHAPTER IV

### JESUS

THE most difficult part of this work now faces us. What are the facts as to Jesus? The problem is the most difficult in all history, and can only be described as a mystery that might well baffle the most expert and the most unbiassed investigator. Within the last twenty-five years criticism has rolled up an immense mass of data, mostly negative, on questions of folklore, of religious custom and legends, of textual criticism, that leaves very little strict historical evidence standing. And the confession must be made that the resulting impression cannot be conveyed to the reader in any very definite terms. In fact there are three possible positions about Jesus, between which there is merely a balance of choice. These three are: (1) that there was no historical Jesus, and that he must be dealt with precisely as Mithra, or Tammuz, or any other redeemer god; (2) that he was Jesus the disciple of Joshua ben Parahiyah; (3) that he was the Jesus of Christian tradition.

A full discussion of these three positions does not, of course, belong to a book of general scope. It must suffice to say that the first is that towards which present-day scholarship appears to be inclining. It has much to recommend it, and is already built up with minute points and arguments to a remarkable extent.



The supporters of this line of thought tend, however, to press their arguments too far. It is doubtless true that the foundation of a characteristic ceremony like that of the communion was ascribed to Jesus by pious fraud, and that the description of the scene was diplomatically made to tally with the details of popular spring festivals, and that such things may be dismissed as unhistorical. But when the same line of explanation is dragged in to fit the most trivial detail and incident, one begins to doubt the necessity of the explanation and the good sense of the explainer. So that while it is generally true to say that almost all the incidents of the life of Jesus, as recorded in the Christian books, can be described as typical myths, and that some of them are conclusively myths and nothing else, yet that does not seem sufficient in itself to dispose of the real existence of Jesus.

The second position is that he lived about 130 to 70 B.C. There is nothing to support this directly save a vague statement in the Talmud, and some hazy historical probabilities based on the rites and on the chronology of the Jewish sects. Yet that chronology, if we attempt to seize its outlines from the time of Joshua ben Parahiyah through Peter to Paul, appeals very strongly to the historian. Its shape looks right. At the same time this foundation must for the present be rejected as too slight and too insecure to build on, and the third position must be accepted, with some reluctance, as the most probable of the three.

For the third position, that of the historical Jesus



in the sense of the Christian books, the strongest argument is not precise but impressionistic. The historical Jesus cannot be demonstrated or proved; he can only be felt as a real personality. And that means that his sayings, taken as a whole after all critical deductions have been made, leave the impression of pronounced and consistent individuality. It is true that such impressions are apt to be untrustworthy, and that in this case the conditions surrounding the gospel text of the sayings of Jesus render caution and misgiving doubly imperative. And yet the impression appears to hold. On such a basis, then, the historical Jesus will now be approached, not in a spirit of historical certitude, but rather in one of grave historical doubt. In fact it would be fair to describe what follows not as history, but as all that can reasonably be argued to remain of the history of Jesus.

Jesus probably came from one of those Jewish families, humble in circumstances yet racially pure, that inhabited the northern parts of Palestine. The population was very mixed, — from the lowest strata of Canaanites, social outcasts representing the most ancient race of the country, to those Jews who had intermarried with Samaritans and others, not keeping the strict requirements of the Hebrew law. Even among the pure Jews it is clear that the influence of the Sanhedrin was not great. It is true that they attended the synagogue to hear the Scriptures expounded, but they were too far from the city of Jerusalem to



feel its religious stimulus keenly,—and soon after the birth of Jesus they passed under a different jurisdiction from southern Palestine. In Galilee ruled Herod, hellenized, superstitious, tyrannical; in Jerusalem a Roman Prætor had been installed, with Roman troops, leaving the Jewish theocracy very much checked in its action.

The times were unhappy. As already related, Palestine had suffered severely since the rapid decay of the Seleucid Empire had set in two centuries earlier. Nor had the irruption of the Romans into the East brought about improved conditions. The Parthian monarchy had gradually risen on the ruins of the Seleucidæ, and had come into violent conflict with the newcomers. Only a few years earlier Crassus had paid with his life for one of the greatest reverses the Roman arms had yet met with, and for the moment the Parthians held the valley of the Euphrates triumphantly. Palestine was again on the edge of the contest, and had to pay.

Her immediate rulers, the Asmonean princes, were more Palestinian than Jewish, more rapacious than national. Politics, both local and international, turned very largely on questions of finance. The world had no banking system, no credit system; yet immense states and vainglorious sovereigns lavished enormous sums on armies or on ostentation; they were powerful in direct ratio of the wealth they could accumulate. And to accumulate wealth meant squeezing it out of those who held it. So that in Palestine the rulers weighed on the rich, and the rich on the poor,



after a fashion that has varied little from that day to this. We have in acute conditions of financial oppression, one of the fundamental facts that explain the life and teaching of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The other fundamental fact is one that will be brought out in the course of the narrative and that is therefore only referred to here, — the opposition between the Jewish preacher of a doctrine of humanity and the dominant Jewish sect whose belief did not extend beyond Hebraism.

The personal history of Jesus, such as it is, cannot be extended over more than the eighteen months or so of his ministry. There is but one incident of his early life that is not improbable in itself, though it is not impossible to find a prototype for it. It is said that as a boy, perhaps of twelve, he was taken to Jerusalem by his parents, and there he was discovered by them within the precincts of the

<sup>1</sup> The following modern conversation in the same country might well have taken place two thousand years ago: —

“Said Najib: ‘He is rich, — may God destroy his dwelling!’

“‘Oh, Mikhail!’ said I, as we picked our way across the muddy fields, ‘I have travelled much in your country . . . and seldom have I met a poor man whom I would not choose for a friend, nor a rich man whom I would not shun. Now, how is this? Does wealth change the very heart in Syria? . . .’

“‘Oh, lady,’ said Mikhail, ‘the heart is the same, but in your country the government is just and strong . . . whereas with us there is no justice, but the big man eats the little, and the little man eats the less, and the government eats all alike. And we all suffer after our kind, and cry out to God to help us since we cannot help ourselves.’” Bell, *The Desert and the Sown*, 318.



Temple disputing with the Doctors. What can be added to this by way of comment is neither lengthy nor important. Precocity is not amazing in a Jewish child, nor is the ability to quote and interpret scriptural passages if the Jewish education of those days resembled that of the modern epoch. Yet the incident does seem to indicate a tendency that the later career justified; and we may also note in such scenes the curiously narrow impasse to which the culture of the Jews had come. All their traditions, all their history had fallen to this, the bitter and continuous chewing and re-chewing of their prophetic books to find a text or an interpretation declaring that the hated Idumæan, that the uncircumcised Roman, might be driven from the seat of Israel.

From that moment all is a blank for nearly twenty years. We can fairly surmise that Jesus did not revisit Jerusalem; and also that the pained agitation of Palestine continued. In fact from this moment until Simon Bar Cochba's gallant attempt to drive out the Romans a hundred years later, Judæa passed through one of her worst epochs; it was marked by the sack of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70; by the migration of the Sanhedrin to Jamnia shortly after that year; by the constant rise of patriots and prophets against the foreigners; by final failure about the year 135. One of these numerous prophets, John the Baptist, proved to be the immediate forerunner of Jesus.

John the Baptist was an ascetic, an inhabitant of the desert, — and the desert begins immediately beyond the Jordan, a few hours' journey from Jerusalem.



Like so many other Jews, he hoped for the accomplishment of the prophecies that foretold a national Saviour, a Messiah or anointed one, — in hellenized form, *χρίστος*, the Christ. The belief in a Jewish revival was rooted, unshakable; sooner or later, the new Davidic prince would come, prophet and king, and from that moment the national destiny would be accomplished. Ezra was clearly not the Messiah, as his work had not lasted, nor was any of the Maccabean princes, as worse things had followed them; but now that the Idumæans and Rome threatened the extinction of Judaism, surely the Messiah must come at last. Some such thought was at the back of John's preaching.

But for that Messiah to come the Jews must repent from the sins that had caused their present afflictions; they must obey the Law and the Prophets. And John was prepared with a symbol for all who should come to him in the spirit of repentance and regeneration, an act of established symbolic repute, baptism by water. It is at that point, on the banks of the Jordan where John is baptizing with water, preaching repentance and the coming of the Christ, that Jesus suddenly comes into view at the threshold of his ministry; he was about thirty years of age.

Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, and under the spell of the dramatic and emotional scene, at once entered on his work. However sudden the start of his mission, there must have been a period of latent preparation, as the extraordinary events that followed seem to demonstrate. And as to this period of prepara-



tion all that can be safely surmised is that it was one of brooding and meditation, perhaps of wandering in the desert, of solitude, and of asceticism. At all events, as he stood there before John in the Jordan, there must have been in his face and in his eye the look that comes only from immense concentration and introspection, the magnetism and will of the healer, the faith and spirituality of the lover of mankind.

He left John only to emulate him. But whereas John did what he was able in repeating the old Jewish texts and baptizing with the water of Jordan, Jesus had thought and speech at his command, the picturesque parable, the brilliant metaphor, the burning sentence, and he straightway began to baptize his fellowmen with golden words that could flash their light a thousand miles away and a thousand years; for those words, spoken in Aramaic, were destined to impress all Western civilization through that most penetrating of mediums, Greek.

We know the modern prophet. He is inevitably the protagonist of a cause or of a creed, of something that can be organized or of something that can be formulated. Not so Jesus. He had no charities to establish, no dogmas to defend. He was merely a son of Palestine, a Jew by race and education, speaking the Aramaic *patois*, with the humble habits of the poor, and within him a fierce blaze of wrath at their sufferings and a righteous courage and eloquence for their defence. And it was on this note that his mission opened. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."



The impression is clear, when one studies the account of the synoptic gospels,<sup>1</sup> that there were two stages in the preaching of Jesus. The first may be described as the preaching of the gospel of the poor; the second is the struggle against the Pharisees. And turning back from Jordan towards his own country about Mount Tabor and the lake of Tiberias, he began, as the New Testament says, to work miracles and preach the gospel. Let us leave the miracles for the present and come at once to the gospel.

His ministration was of two sorts, public and private. He entered the synagogues to expound the Scriptures after the Jewish fashion, and he entered the house he met by the wayside to expound life itself. His exposition of the Scriptures was strikingly unorthodox and commanded instant attention. Like all oracular works the Jewish sacred books lent themselves to a wide range of interpretation, and Jesus, whose thought was concentrated on suffering humanity, discovered in his text meanings very different from those associated with them by the Talmudic doctors. "The Sabbath was made for man," he declared, "and not man for the Sabbath."

He immediately drew large crowds of hearers, and aroused strong opposition from the strict Jews of the upper caste at Capernaum and in the neighbouring villages. He thereupon withdrew to a less peopled district, possibly that of Mount Tabor, in an attempt to escape to the solitude of the hills. But he was followed by a great number of people, to whom he is said

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, Mark and Luke.



to have finally addressed what is, in reality, a collection of sayings of which a certain proportion certainly goes back to the old Jewish writers and is not properly ascribable to Jesus: this was the famous Sermon on the Mount.

One side of the Sermon on the Mount requires little enough emphasis. The dignity, simplicity and beauty with which the seventeenth century English translation has clothed the Greek text, has made of it one of the foundation stones of English thought. That the meek, and lowly, and poor, that the merciful and the persecuted, should have a spiritual compensation, touches human emotion so profoundly that the thought requires no elaboration. Might it be described as an emotion of pity at the wastage of nature and of human society?

But what does require emphasis, for it has been given less attention, is the logical conclusion to which Jesus was carried. If the humble, the poor and the persecuted were to inherit the kingdom of heaven, "woe unto you that are rich!" And note the reason: "for you have received your consolation." And again "Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. . . ."

Now it would be casuistry to argue that the doctrine of Jesus was that wealth was equivalent to sin, but it would be lacking in candour not to declare that he came as near that position as possible, and that he generally assumed that such was the case. And even if the conditions of bad government in his time and country went far to justify the belief that it was harder for a rich man to attain Heaven than for a



camel to pass through the eye of a needle, clearly enough it was an extreme levelling doctrine that was bound to bring him into conflict with government sooner or later. Nor was the doctrine merely a levelling one; there was another side to it.

This other side is doctrinal, and before it can be fairly stated, a digression is necessary. For the sayings of Jesus as to the future life, as to reward and punishment, cannot be understood historically, without glancing for one moment at the general movement of such beliefs. This will be summarized here under the following heads: the individual life; the idea of Hell; the idea of Heaven; immortality.

There are two broad currents of thought through all the ages as to the individual, one subordinating, the other emphasizing him. Where the family organization and the racial sense are strong, as generally in the tribal state, the individual is subordinated. He is even in many cases thought of as a mere part of a greater whole, the family, from which his life proceeds and into which it merges. From such a starting-point the future life appears at first non-individual and non-heavenly; for it is the life of the collective group that continues the life of its individual member. The early Greeks undoubtedly held beliefs of this kind, and even within the historical period their narrow little city-religions strongly subordinated the individual to his city. A modern example may be sought in the Japanese beliefs. And it would be hasty to relegate this mode of thought to primitive races, and thus conveniently shelve the subject.



For many of the phenomena of psychology and of physics studied at the present day suggest that we may have carried the idea of the four square, absolutely distinct individual, a little further than is warranted. At the time of Christ it was the later, individual idea that prevailed in the Græco-Asiatic world.

Hell and Heaven; eternal life; reward and punishment, — all these are very elusive terms. They have been so variously interpreted, even at the same epoch by members of the same faith, that a general warning is necessary before discussing them. This warning is that, unless it is specifically stated otherwise, these terms will always be used here in a wide sense, and never in a narrow theological one, never in terms of strict definition. Speaking thus broadly it may be said that the idea of Hell is one of the most ancient of those held by man; that the idea of Hell is slowly followed by that of Heaven, until the two form the exact counterpart of one another; and that finally the idea of Hell begins gradually to fade away, leaving Heaven to stand by itself, — a process the observant may witness proceeding fast at our own day.

Hell in its earliest phases was the region below ground to which the dead had been relegated, — and it was not so unnatural to think of them as existing where their bodies had been placed. Hell in that sense was not a place of torture, not the abode of demons; it was merely a great earthy cupboard of Nature in which the dead more or less maintained their



identity. From that starting-point the idea developed along the ways of national imagination, or of oracular priestcraft, one way in Egypt, another way in Greece, and yet another in Persia. One might go back for many centuries before Christ and trace these ideas and their influence, but it does not seem necessary for the purpose in hand. It will suffice to say that among the Jews at his time there were two schools of thought on this matter. The Sadducees held the old-fashioned view, based validly enough on the Pentateuch, that there was a primitive sort of Hell, a place in which there was no new life; and they therefore disbelieved in Heaven. The Pharisees were far less conservative. They had taken over new ideas, borrowing very largely from the Egyptians, Greeks and Persians in the matter of the future life and of good and bad angels, and they were now wedded to a full-fledged doctrine of reward and punishment, of Heaven and Hell.

It was that doctrine which Jesus, naturally enough, accepted, and it was the inevitable consequence of his gospel of the poor. This is no matter of the interpretation of this or that convenient text, but of the large and consistent meaning of his preaching viewed as a whole, taken in text after text, in parable after parable. And his insistence on punishment is as great as his insistence on reward; and through it there breathes a flame and points a sword that recall the fire and destruction with which Joshua had visited the Canaanites more than a thousand years before.

This, then, was the teaching of Jesus, the gospel of



suffering humanity against the rich oppressor, the promise of a future reward and punishment, based on a judgment between sin and virtue, between present affliction and present enjoyment. It was a doctrine fit for the country and the times; and it was preached with a faith and conviction that shook Palestine so profoundly that the world is even now under its influence. And this brings us to another aspect of this teaching, the faith and conviction that lay behind it, and the marvels which that faith accomplished.

It would seem probable that the intuitional faculties of Jesus were exceptionally developed, and were happily blended with an intellectual keenness to which his utterances bear sufficient witness. Again it may be surmised that this intuitional side of his nature was developed by introspection and by asceticism. Perhaps he had been influenced by the teaching of followers of Buddha, or had learnt the mysteries of faith healing and suggestion from some magic-working traveller of the desert. Be this as it may, there is no valid reason for rejecting the supposition that he had in some way developed great psychical power and that an essential part of his ministry was healing the sick.

This healing of the sick was faith-healing; we have it from his own lips. At Capernaum the servant of the centurion is healed because of his faith: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. . . . Go thy way, and as thou hast believed so be it done unto thee." And in one of the documents recently recovered in Egypt he is made to say:



“Neither does a physician work cures on them that know him,” — the utterance of a psychologist familiar with the deeper workings of human nature, accustomed to play on the imagination of men.

But if Jesus had indeed skilled himself in such powers as these, he turned their use always in the direction of his mission of charity. One scene<sup>1</sup> in which the two elements blend stands out in bold relief, — a scene more clear and convincing in its peculiarity of circumstance than many others in the account of the synoptists. Irresistibly drawn, Jesus had reached Jerusalem. His struggle with the Pharisees had entered the acute stage; and they were trying to trap him into a false step. One day they brought to the Temple and placed before him a woman who had been taken in adultery; and they asked: what shall be done unto her?

Now the precise nature of the difficulty was this. The Jewish law, on which the Sanhedrin was the final authority, — and the Sanhedrin was mostly Pharisee in its composition, — declared that the punishment for this offence was stoning to death. But Judæa was now under a Roman Prætor, and the Roman government, although it permitted the Jewish law to be enforced under certain conditions, would not allow the Sanhedrin to judge such an offence and apply the death-penalty; that would be a matter for the Prætor himself. So the dilemma was this: either Jesus must evade declaring that the woman should

<sup>1</sup> It is not given in the best Greek manuscripts, but that is not a conclusive reason for rejecting it.



be stoned to death, in which case he clearly failed in his interpretation of the Scriptures, or else he must pronounce the correct sentence and come into conflict with the Roman authorities.

Once before he had skilfully parried a similar attack, when asked whether tribute was lawfully due to Rome, by the answer: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and unto God the things that are God's." Now he was again skilful, and something more. Imagine the scene: a woman caught in a shameful act and carried along by a crowd of men. She stands before them defenceless, under immediate threat of a terrifying death. And questions are shouted at the peasant prophet who stands under the porch of the Temple: what is to be done with this woman? The answer was surprising, was probably intended to surprise: "Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not." For some minutes he held them still in that way, then, looking up, gave them his unanswerable retort: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And after this he resumed his mysterious occupation, suggestive of magic and of the unknown. Under this spell, moral, intellectual and psychological, the woman's accusers gradually melted away from the force which they felt but could not understand. And finally Jesus, perhaps exhausted by his effort and careless of the rest, merely said to the woman: "Go, and sin no more." Surely in that scene was concentrated all that was most remarkable in Jesus; to a modern mind it must surely re-



main the most convincing and the greatest of his miracles.

His conflict with the Pharisees came to a head very rapidly, and could have but one termination. He had offended them from the first. He had never spared them. As his following grew he sent out agents to spread his views, and he attacked the Pharisees more and more vigorously. He entered their synagogues to expose them, and he finally proceeded to their stronghold, the Sacred City itself, Jerusalem. As to the precise facts about the visit or visits of Jesus to Jerusalem the New Testament account is confused and contradictory. Fortunately all that need concern us here is their general outline.

When Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate his last Passover, he was undoubtedly in fear of his life. Stripping the narrative of elements of which the unreliability will be shown presently, we are left with a human, touching picture of his mental agonies and uncertainty during those few days of struggle and defeat. At times it looks as though he anticipated his failure and death, as when he says: "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep"; or again: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."<sup>1</sup> For the rest it was a struggle to maintain his

<sup>1</sup> It is with grave misgiving that these two quotations are used; the first is probably connected with Persian or Indian astronomical cult ideas, the latter points straight to the rites of Adonis, of which more later.



moral hold on his followers, who at times seemed to promise him a real triumph, as on the day of his arrival at Jerusalem when they acclaimed him as the Son of David. To turn back would be to acknowledge defeat, to go on threatened death. And so he went on, but in doubt and mental agony.

At the last supper with his disciples, a rite already in vogue among unorthodox Jews, "he was troubled in spirit and testified, and said:— Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me." And later that night, while wandering among the hills that encircle the city, momentarily expecting arrest, "he began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them: My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. . . . O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me. . . ."

It is perhaps at this point that a narrative aiming at historical veracity should stop. The accounts of the judgment and crucifixion of Jesus are almost certainly myths reproducing popular ceremonies and beliefs. Yet a shred of doubt remains, and on this shred of doubt, the narrative will be carried as far as it may be legitimately, and for what it is worth.

On the following day Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin, presided over by the High Priest Caiaphas. The usual battle of scriptural interpretation was fought, with a view to fastening the crime of blasphemy and false prophecy on Jesus. "Art thou the Son of God, that is the Messiah?" Caiaphas asked him. "Ye say that I am," replied Jesus; on which the High Priest and elders rent their clothes, and declared the



blasphemy pronounced. So runs the synoptic account, showing that the disputation was of an interpretative theological character, though little is said as to its real incidents. Jesus, at all events, held fast to the ground he had taken as a prophet of Israel, and that was enough to condemn him.

But that condemnation could lead to no result without the concurrence of the Roman Prætor, Pontius Pilate: so Jesus was carried before the representative of the Emperor Tiberius. How striking a scene when we remember the two thousand years that followed: the three centuries of Imperial Rome, the seventeen centuries of Papal Rome! How little could the Roman judge and the Jewish prophet, standing there face to face, foresee that the political and the religious ideas each stood for were to be blended together three centuries later, and hand in hand were to come down through countless centuries, the greatest organized force of western civilization!

Pilate was very reluctant to accede to the wishes of the Sanhedrin. He questioned Jesus, and was favourably impressed with his replies. "My kingdom is not of this world," he said. "To this end was I born that I should bear witness unto the truth." But the Pharisees made vigourous demonstrations, and the Prætor decided that the politic thing would be to let the Sanhedrin have its way, so he ordered Jesus to be executed, as the Jewish law demanded.

Late in the afternoon he was taken to the hill of Golgotha, outside the city, and there was crucified, — a painful form of capital punishment usually involv-



ing a long drawn out and lingering death. Only one sentence has been preserved of anything Jesus may have said on the cross; it was, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" — and it told the story of his defeat at the hands of the Pharisees. At nightfall one of his followers, a member of the Sanhedrin whose name was Joseph of Arimathea, went to Pilate and asked leave to take down the body. "Pilate marvelled if he were already dead," but gave the desired permission.

Jesus was removed from the cross at night, and placed in a grotto in the garden of Gethsemane. As to what followed, the accounts of the Gospels are so confused and contradictory, oscillate so violently from a natural to a miraculous interpretation, that it is difficult to advance anything that will bear the mark of historical probability. These facts will receive notice in another connection later; for the moment all that can be added as to Jesus is that possibly he was seen again, probably in Galilee, but that his mission was really at an end. He had preached the doctrine of humanity, he had given his life for it, and he had associated yet other things with his name, from all of which, a few years later, an edifice was to be constructed that was eventually to be known as Christianity. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."



## CHAPTER V

PAUL

THE crucifixion of Jesus took place in a remote corner of the great Roman Empire, and passed unnoticed by contemporary writers.<sup>1</sup> It was not until after another thirty or forty years that the life of Christ came to be written, and that under conditions far from satisfactory. But before coming to the tangled maze of the early Christian writings and beliefs, let us first take a general glance at the great political fabric within the bounds of which they were formed.

Rome has so far figured but little in these pages. It was noted that at the period of the Babylonian Captivity she had not yet obtained a footing in the annals of history. During the two centuries of the Persian Empire, the Republic grew rapidly in power, and when Alexander built the new Greek Empire, Rome was obtaining the mastery of central Italy. Half a century later the Carthaginian war was undertaken, and the final triumph of Zama in 202 B.C. left Rome, almost suddenly, the greatest power of the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup> From that moment the conquest of the East engrossed her efforts. The Greek mon-

<sup>1</sup> Several allusions of the sort are now admitted to be forgeries.

<sup>2</sup> Zama marks the close of Carthaginian power, though it was not until half a century later that Scipio destroyed the city of Carthage.



archies, offshoots of the empire of Alexander, were conquered one by one, and the Asiatic monarchies of Asia Minor. So that by the beginning of the Christian era Rome held western Europe, the Balkan peninsula, the greater part of Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine and Egypt.

To the east of this great Mediterranean empire lay a hostile region. The conquest of Alexander had been weakest along the northern border that lay between the Caspian and Kashmir, and the Seleucids, who inherited from him, had very soon to face a Parthian or Persian danger. As their power crumbled, and that very fast after the beginning of the second century B.C., a Parthian state had arisen, and, as the generals of the Republic pushed their way further east from their conquest of Asia Minor, had come into sharp conflict with Rome. It was fated that Rome should never hold the lower valley of the Euphrates, and there a hostile bar was raised against her that she never could overcome.

The constitution of Rome was hardly strong enough to support the vast edifice she built; but her military virtues and organization, her practical talent for administration, succeeded for a while in making good the deficiency. The great era of Roman conquest had been marked by the formation of vast and powerful armies, and by the struggles of the leaders of those armies for supreme power. Civil war had gone hand in hand with foreign conquest, and out of the burning crucible of armies and kingdoms Cæsar and Augustus had succeeded, only a very few years before the birth



of Jesus, in imposing on the Republic a military but veiled autocracy. And side by side with this march of conquest had gone a huge extension of slavery.

From the earliest epoch to the time of Christ slavery may be said to have steadily increased in the Mediterranean world. In the primitive days of Greece, and later of Rome, slavery was little more than the ordinary incident of warfare; but as political power and private luxury increased, it took on a larger aspect. Athens, at the period of her prosperity, had many more slaves than freemen; while five hundred years later, under the first Roman emperors, the institution took on gigantic, almost incredible, proportions; it was the basis of organized society. From the moment when Rome entered on her conquest of the East two outstanding facts marked her wars: they were directed towards financial plunder and the financial betterment of the Italian legionaries; they were incidentally huge slave drives.

Unfortunately we have but a scant record of the countless millions reduced to social inferiority by the conquests of Rome. Our direct records come from the higher classes, our histories, unfortunately, almost always from the governing classes. So that it is only by an effort of the imagination, and at the risk which that implies, that we can reconstitute certain conditions that this state of slavery brought about. And it should not be forgotten in this connection that at the time of Christ the value of slaves varied enormously with their quality; mere ploughmen were generally a drug on the market, while intelligent crafts-



men, practitioners, writers and beautiful women and children fetched large sums. In the great houses of Rome these slaves of high quality abounded. Let us sum up by saying that for centuries, a large and very select part of the population of the Mediterranean had been reduced to slavery by the accident of war; and this at a time when a great increase of peaceful commercial intercourse, and the humanizing influence of Greek culture were fast advancing civilization. What was the result? Will it be too bold to say that as this wholesale degradation became intensified, an ethical unrest, disquietude, slowly arose, unconscious and unrealized at first, yet a deep influence in moulding men's minds to the great religious change that was impending? This line of thought must not be followed for the present into the field of Greek literature, in which Zeno and the Alexandrians must soon claim our attention, but the city life of the Empire, and particularly of the populous East must first be noticed.

Following the example of Persians and Greeks, the Romans planted colonies. They not only founded cities about the nucleus of an Italian legion, but eventually extended the privilege of Roman citizenship to favoured individuals or towns. The result of this, following similar processes of the ante-Roman period, was somewhat curious. Whereas Italy was a fairly homogeneous latinized country, and Greece with Macedonia an even more homogeneous Greek country, Asia Minor presented a patchwork quilt effect of tribes, nations, cults and cities. Many cities were



almost purely Greek; among these some were distinguished by the grant of Roman privileges; a few were Roman foundations; in some the older Asiatic races prevailed; in all there were communities of Greeks and communities of Jews; while here and there a remote Asiatic contingent, planted by the Persians, still remained.

In these Asiatic cities Greek had long been the superior language, and this was not altered by the Roman conquest. The Jews, too, had accepted the fact, had often enough changed their names into Greek forms, just as at the present day they use German or Polish or any other convenient patronymics. Most of these cities had cleverly trimmed their sails as the legions marched into them, had succeeded in buying off the threatened devastation, and had gently shifted off one yoke and slipped another on. There was economic activity among them: on one side the Mediterranean with Rome and her western provinces, greedy for all forms of Oriental luxury; on the other the east to which the Persian monarchs had opened one great road from Ephesus to the valley of the Euphrates so early as the fifth century before Christ. Art and literature flourished; and at Athens, Tarsus, and Alexandria, were what would be described in modern parlance as the three great universities of the Mediterranean world.

Thus a curious result came about. From the shores of the Black Sea to the river Nile about Thebes, the Asiatic part of the Roman world was, as it still is to-day, a conglomerate of many races and creeds



that retained their special groupings. Yet through them all ran unifying tendencies. Trade was highly developed, and largely in the hands of Greeks and Jews. War was no longer local but imperial. Language was international. Religion, in the older local forms, had broken down badly, while no form suited to the new conditions had yet been evolved. As to religion, however, this may be added, that two great tendencies were manifest: one was to seek for an ethical, humane basis; the other was to concentrate the Roman cults on the person of that new constitutional creation, the Emperor, or Emperor.

Let us come now more particularly to Palestine and to the forty years, more or less, that passed between the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70.

First let us see the political conditions. The nationalistic movements among the Jews continued without interruption. False prophets arose, and fell. The Sanhedrin resented the gradual encroachment of Rome and kept striving for a national resurrection. Judæa was added to the Palestinian vassal kingdom of Herod Agrippa I by the Emperor Claudius in A.D. 41. Three years later Herod died, and Claudius, reversing his policy, converted the kingdom into a Roman province. Nine years later Herod Agrippa II was permitted to take over the government, but his education and views were purely Roman, and the Jews did not find in him a national king. The situation became more and more acute. In 64 took place the first persecution of the Christians at Rome under



the Emperor Nero, and these Christians were doubtless for the most part hellenized Jews. In 66 Judæa rose in arms against Rome, and for four years a struggle was maintained, which was terminated by the capture of Jerusalem, at the Passover of the year 70, by Titus. Great numbers of its inhabitants perished; many were sent as slaves to Rome and elsewhere; others escaped to Babylonia, where the Jewish population was large, and there formed an element from which important religious influences were to proceed later.

During this period how were the doctrines of Jesus continued? It appears as though immediately after his death there was a small band of unorthodox Jews located at Jerusalem professing the cult of Jesus as the redeemer god and practising the rites of baptism and the communion supper. Among them the lead was taken by Peter, who according to the Gospel, was first among the disciples to proclaim Jesus the Christ, the son of the living God. Their common basis seems to have been faith in the divine mission of Jesus, and in his gospel of the poor. This Jewish community appears further to have put this gospel to the test of practice by establishing community of goods among themselves. Their creed was curious but well defined.

They believed that Jesus was the Christ who should accomplish those Messianic prophecies which their sacred books contained in such variety. But the political conditions of their time, and the actual course of the prophetic career of Jesus, led them to a new in-



terpretation of these prophecies in which were blended non-Jewish concepts; for his Kingdom was not of this world but of the world to come. Textual interpretation of the Old Testament soon adapted itself to this metamorphosis. From the world to come he was, therefore, soon to return, and then to establish his reign upon earth; — which went beyond any of the Messianic prophecies. This fabric of doctrine was strongly supported on a foundation of miracles; and it may be noted that in the book of the Acts of the Apostles Peter is always supporting his utterances by miracles, and that his record of achievement in that matter surpasses that of Jesus himself.

One particular of this doctrine brings us to the point at which the composite element of what was soon to become Christianity, may be fairly said to begin, as far as the Christian sacred books are concerned. The Messianic idea was Jewish; the second coming was also in a way Jewish, — evolved by the followers of Jesus;<sup>1</sup> but the idea of the resurrection was composite. It reposed in part perhaps on some actual incidents of the close of the life of Jesus, but it also reposed on one of the most ancient religious ideas of Asia, which the inhabitants of Palestine and the less orthodox part of the Jews themselves had held during a long period. That idea, by subtle and slight degrees, slipped into the new-forming religion.

<sup>1</sup> In its first form this idea may well have been merely that he would return from Galilee where he had gone after the escape from the tomb in the garden of Gethsemane. Later the analogous ideas in the cults of Mithra or Adonis would doubtless blend in.



The cult of the Jewish Jehovah, as already pointed out, was a peculiar one. It was lofty in its singleness, in its ethical standard, in its uncompromising exclusiveness; yet it was narrow, difficult, intensely nationalistic. Only a chosen residue of the Jews had held to it from the days of the conquest to those of Caiaphas; and it was imbedded in the midst of the Semitic beliefs that had continued from immemorial times among the earlier inhabitants of Palestine. These beliefs were always prevalent among the great mass of Jews who intermarried with other Semites, or who in other ways lost their close hold on the religion of Jehovah.

Among the most important of these Semitic deities we find Baal<sup>1</sup> in the early period, Tammuz in the later. Baalbek, just north of Palestine, was one of the greatest centres of the Semitic cults after the fall of Babylon; and perhaps the Persian influence developed there, during the fifth and fourth century, the attributes and worship of the Sun God. Under the Seleucids the Greeks built some of their greatest temples at Baalbek, which they called Heliopolis, and the temple of the Sun which they erected was one of the supreme achievements of later Greek art.

Tammuz also was hellenized. He was Adon Tammuz, the Lord Tammuz, and the Greeks, fastening on the prefix, called him Adonis. The cult of Adonis was probably the dominant hellenized Asiatic cult,

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking Baal is god, and should be followed by a descriptive epithet, but he will concern us so little that it will be unnecessary to particularize.



at the time of Christ, of the country on both sides of Jerusalem; its two great centres were Byblos at the foot of Lebanon, and Alexandria, the largest centre of the Jews after Jerusalem.

The cult of Tammuz, or of Adonis, as he may better be called, had at its foundations the great mystery of nature, death and life. At times this was associated with the idea of the decline of the sun at the winter solstice and its springing up again. But here we are concerned chiefly with the central ceremony of the cult, which shows clearly enough its associated ideas. Once a year the god died. The women, wailing over his beauty, then took his effigy, washed it, anointed it with spices and myrrh, and buried it. Wheat and other seed were then sown, a rite of which the significance appears clearly from the very words attributed to Christ: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." The grain sent up a plant, perhaps by the same trick as modern Indian jugglers play with the mango, and the resurrection of Adonis took place within a few days, when he was supposed to ascend to heaven in the presence of his worshippers. In Syria the festival appears to have occurred in the late spring or early summer, — say about Whitsuntide.

There are other details of the cult of Adonis that are not in point in the present connection, and are therefore not noticed, but a few matters of more doubtful significance deserve mention. Ishtar, the great goddess of generation of the Babylonians and



Canaanites, the Astarte of the Greeks, was supposed to be wedded to young and beautiful Tammuz; she was also identified with the morning or evening star. Now note that although Jesus is very consistently treated by himself and others as a man of Nazareth, a pious hand, anxious to prove certain Messianic prophecies, inserted in the synoptic gospels the story of the birth of Christ in the city of Bethlehem, marked by the rise of a star in heaven. But Bethlehem was not only the city of David, which accorded with the Jewish prophecy; it was also according to St. Jerome, a seat of the cult of Adonis, which accords with something very different.<sup>1</sup> It may further be noticed as something more than curious that the Easter ceremonies of the Greek Church at the present day turn on the burial of an effigy of Jesus in a manner that coincides very nearly with the ceremonies performed over the dead Adonis two thousand years ago.

But no ceremony can ever equal in importance the idea that shelters behind it. In the first century of the Christian era there was more to be read into the mystery of the resurrection of Adonis than the symbolizing of the constant death and rebirth of nature. Humanity had become self-conscious. Intercourse and trade had made man less destructive. The influence of woman had grown with

<sup>1</sup> See Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, passim. For the star, see further the interesting passage [p. 157] referring to the occasion of the Emperor Julian's visit to Antioch. This cult was known to the Greeks in the seventh century B.C.



great rapidity. There was a latent reaction against the horrors of warfare, the degradation of slavery; and an aspiration towards a loftier cult in which man would find a higher self expression. In all this the wonderful art of the Greeks played its part. It based its standard of beauty on reality, on man seen as man, and could portray the dead Adonis as man in all that was most beautiful, held in the arms of sorrowing Astarte. That sentiment of pity, of pity at the waste of beauty, and life, and love, was a sentiment that cut deep into human hearts, and deeper when applied not to the mythical Adonis but to the real Jesus. And if any reader needs persuasion let him go to St. Peter's at Rome and look at the *Pietà* of Michael Angelo. For there, to-day, is Astarte still mourning over the dead Adonis in her arms, or rather Mary mourning over Christ, half virgin, half mother, wholly beautiful, compassionate, and comforting. The great Catholic sculptor has only expressed with overpowering genius what his Greek predecessors were expressing fifteen hundred years before to a not irresponsive world.

This digression has been long, yet necessary for realizing certain aspects of the Roman world in the first century ; we must now turn back to the little community at Jerusalem that Peter led. If what has just been written concerning the cult of Adonis has any force, it may then be added that in its beliefs this community shows signs that it was blending the facts that marked the death of Jesus with the prevalent cult of its own age and country. The process



was a perfectly natural one, easy to parallel even at the present day; and the evidence for it is to be found in a careful and dispassionate reading of the synoptic gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The almost universal cult of a redeemer god was being incorporated, in its Palestinian form, with unorthodox Hebraism.

While Peter, therefore, preached the redeemer Jesus to the Jews, and while his followers supported their mission largely on a basis of miraculous tales, a new turn was given to the situation by the advent of the last and greatest of the Hebrew prophets. This was a hellenized, even romanized Jew of Tarsus, Saul by name, or in Roman form Paul.

Paul represented a class intermediate between the Jews of Jerusalem and those who had partly merged into other nationalities. He came of a strict Jewish family that followed the Law, always looking towards Jerusalem, yet that lived in a large Greek city, a centre of trade and culture. His father, indeed, had acquired Roman citizenship and transmitted it to his son.

The early years of Paul were marked by the conflict between these two elements in him. Was he to be a Jew of the Jews, or a citizen of the great Mediterranean empire? For some years it appeared as though the former ideal would prevail. He went to Jerusalem as a youth to study the Law and the Prophets, and soon took a prominent part as a persecutor of the sect of which Peter was the head. His intellectual and physical vigour, his flaming zeal and concentrated energy of action were brought into play;



and, if the story in the Acts of the Apostles can be relied on, he soon came into open collision with the followers of Peter. The occasion was dramatic.

It has already been stated that these believers in a Jewish redeemer god were as a rule poor men, and apparently practised and inculcated community of goods. An obscure difficulty arose in Judæa with regard to a legal question as to the alimony due to widows, Greeks and Jews. This difficulty Peter took it on himself to solve, in a manner that is not clearly stated, and through the agency of a special committee on which was one named Stephen. It is clearly to be surmised, however, that these agents would solve the problem in the direction of the theory of a community of goods, and in that of their own peculiar religious tenets. As a result a storm broke over their heads, and in that storm Stephen perished, earning the first place in the long catalogue of the martyrs. Paul displayed great activity among those who led the Pharisee movement that resulted in the stoning of Stephen to death. But it may be noted that when at about the same time the Sanhedrin summoned Peter before it, Paul's master, Gamaliel, apparently showed some misgiving, and persuaded the council to let Peter go.

It often enough happens with men of strong mind and active disposition that the very doubts they feel at bottom, push them on to greater and greater activity in a false direction. Such may well have been the case with Paul, doubt latent in him, yet in action becoming more and more zealous, the arch persecutor



and afflictor of the struggling sect. He continued on this path until the year 34, and then suddenly reacted and found his mission.

On the road to Damascus Paul was suddenly struck to earth in a blaze of light; he temporarily lost his sight, and was some days recovering. While in this abnormal state he saw a vision of the Jewish Redeemer; and he was attended in the city by an adherent of the new sect. On his recovery he was a changed man. A flash of realization had burst in on him: that the struggle was hopeless with the scourge and the prison to dominate a spiritual resistance; that if in obvious fact Jesus was dead, yet in spirit he might have risen again provided only faith would adopt this consoling, potent, mystic and marvel-working hypothesis. Here was both an undeniable fact and a sublime mystery, an all-pervading force, the road to truth, to salvation, to the regeneration of mankind. It was this, or something very like it that happened to Paul on the desert road near the gates of Damascus.

The new convert at once set to work, much to the astonishment, almost dismay, of those he had so vigorously persecuted. And he proceeded to preach Jesus after a fashion which was not exactly that of Peter and his associates. Yet as there was little enough in the way of formulated beliefs, little enough in the way of organized ritual, and as the preaching of Jesus both by Peter and by Paul was largely bound up with the textual exposition and interpretation of the elastic Old Testament allegories so



dear to the Jews, the divergence between the Petrine and the Pauline preaching was not of necessity irreconcilable. The peasant of Judæa, the high-born Jew of Alexandria, the Greek convert, the hellenized Pharisee of Tarsus, could not be expected to fit the messianic and Old Testament prophecies to the redeemer god cult in identical terms.

With Paul the tendency to diverge was deep-seated, and that because of his individual power, fortitude and imagination, coupled with a political outlook that was at the antipodes from that of the Jews of Palestine. For some years, however, this tendency was not fully revealed; but in A.D. 45, while proselytizing in Antioch, he boldly turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, and declared his mission to be not the restoration of a Jewish kingdom, but the christianization of the Mediterranean world. It is when this great stage of Paul's career is entered that his teaching and its effects must be noted in detail.

Historians and theologians of all varieties of opinion agree as to the supreme importance of Paul as the infuser of Christianity into the Roman world; and following this up they invariably concentrate their attention on him and his work. But although Paul was undoubtedly the greatest single factor in the momentous change that was impending, he stood for only one type of the Jewish mind, and the process that took place was really the impregnation of the Roman world by the Jewish mind, — and of that mind there were other representatives. To see it on all sides we must take the three great Jewish contemporaries :



Jesus, Paul and Philo of Alexandria. For no correct view of Paul can be obtained save in the light of the larger generalization that embraces both Jesus and Philo.

Philo was a Jew of high lineage born at Alexandria about ten years before the Christian era. His education combined completely the whole course of the Jewish and of the Greek instruction. He not only knew the Law and the Prophets, but he was steeped in Homer, the Attic drama, and Greek philosophy from Pythagoras to Zeno, and from Zeno to those professors of philosophy under whom he had studied, and that he was to surpass. He rose in due course to be the chief Jewish doctor of Alexandria, the president of its synagogue, and also the greatest philosopher of his day in the Alexandrian schools. He did not, apparently, come into contact with the obscure sect of the Christians, which spread far more rapidly towards Asia Minor than it did towards Egypt. And so he may be said to stand for the fusion of the Jewish thought with the Greek in the Old Testament sense, just as Paul stands for it in the New Testament sense. Philo, Paul, Jesus, represented Judaism in a triple aspect, and it was Judaism in this larger aspect that was at this very moment making a violent impact, marked by many notable incidents, on the Mediterranean world.

The Roman state was going through extraordinary changes just before and just after the time of Christ. Fifty years before, it was still under the sway of the Republic, dominated by the great personality of Cæ-



sar; fifty years after, it had already passed through and left behind the reign of the Emperor Caligula, one of the most poignantly infamous pages that despotism has ever seared into human memory. Cæsar, to strengthen his usurped authority, had secured the title of Pontifex Maximus, or high priest. Tiberius and his successors had rapidly advanced from that point to divinity itself. In this they were only following an example set by the Greek monarchies. For when Alexander conquered the East, there was little in religion of the later ideas of the universal god and the future life; its rites were socio-political in their significance, its cults centred on gods who were often enough conceived of as nothing more than supermen. What more natural then than that Alexander should erect his own cult as the supreme and unifying religious rite of his empire? The idea was followed by the Greek monarchs who succeeded him. The Roman Republic continued the tradition by setting up statues of Roma for worship. And with the insane Caligula, who reigned from 37 to 41 A.D. we reach the enforced adoration of the Emperor as the supreme God. A statue of Caligula as God was even sent to Jerusalem to be erected in the Temple to compel the homage and worship of the recalcitrant Jews.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There was also a legal and constitutional idea behind the cult, though it does not directly bear on the questions here discussed. There is an admirable passage on the breakdown of the Greek city god system at the time of Alexander in Ferguson, *Hellenistic Athens*, 226.



On the surface, except among the Jews, there was little but acquiescence. The servile conditions on which Rome now rested her power reacted against her. Servility and fawning crept up from the slave to the aristocrat, and surrounded the Emperors. Their cult merely transposed into ceremonial form the adoration of their Courts, and tended to superimpose a centralized worship on the numerous and hollow forms of the Roman religion. But below the surface there was a revolt of outraged opinion and virtue. This revolt was confined to a small class, but one that deserves the closest attention.

As early as three hundred years before Christ, Zeno was giving to Greek philosophy that particular turn that was to convert it into the great moral constituent of Rome at the epoch of the early Emperors. He founded the school of thought known as Stoicism, that ranged all the way from Babylon to Rome, and that received its greatest development in Italy. The Stoic belief, — sometimes described as a materialistic pantheism, — was in a supreme, omnipotent and moral God, at which point it coincided with the higher Brahmanistic ideas. It laid the greatest stress on conduct and conscience, rejecting happiness as a norm, and accepting unhappiness and suffering. It carried humanitarianism to a point where its doctrine was almost a menace to the Roman state, for it recognised the brotherhood and essential equality of all men. During the first century its greatest Italian representative was Seneca, a contemporary of Jesus, who practised in Rome the counterpart of the Gali-



lean's gospel of the poor, for he, a senator and consul, invited his slaves to his own table.

But the weakness of Stoicism was the weakness of all philosophical schools: it was not a religion. True, the religions of Greece and Rome were merely ceremonial and non-ethical, and in its ethics Stoicism contained the most precious of religious elements. Yet, as the mass of mankind is constituted, it rejects as non-religious that which is not susceptible of organization and of ceremonial, or in other words of the opportunity for collective and emotional action. Stoicism might touch with splendour the highest levels, it could never illuminate the dark valleys in which the mass of Roman humanity blindly struggled. Here and there a few gifted and noble men tried, in the midst of surrounding turpitude, to live up to the precepts of Zeno, but their influence was slight; their importance was greatest as a symptom of latent moral reaction.

As a symptom these Stoics stood for a considerable body of the inhabitants of the Roman world who, most of them not learned enough to profess a philosophical doctrine, can only be dimly discerned through the historical fog. They were that finest flower of civilization, the men who could rise above the ties of family, or city, or imperial dominion, who could resist the pursuit of fortune and the conservative or sensuous appeal of religion, to give their allegiance to conscience alone. There were many such in the Empire, often enough the retired merchants or soldiers, who had seen all countries, dealt with all men and finally



learnt to estimate mankind and themselves at the test of real values. But where could they turn for salvation? Towards Rome, — or towards Jerusalem?

At Rome, in the year 41, was Caligula, by public repute a monster, and lately, by the force of the Roman law, proclaimed God; there, clearly, was no help. The Emperor failing, what could the Empire do? It could offer the Stoic philosophy, the refined and academic pursuit of aristocratic dilettantes. It could offer the rigid and empty formalism of the Roman cults, or the sensuous rites of the Greek and Asiatic gods, or the pursuit of beauty in art, or of sheer pleasure in Epicureanism. Again, nothing to satisfy revolted conscience. But there was one thing more, and for that thing Philo, Paul, Jesus, all equally stood. In every city, especially in Greece and Asia, stood the unpretentious little temple or synagogue of the Jews. There a congregation assembled several times a week, austere in demeanour and practice, to worship an invisible and omnipotent deity. The severity of the cult, its ethical force, the rigid devotion of its followers, could not but draw the attention and strike the imagination of those who were seeking for the moral support of a moral religion. And a few scraps of evidence, together with the general trend of Paul's epistles and the Acts, must serve to formulate this general conclusion, that in many parts of the Empire men were looking towards the Jewish synagogues, and in not a few cases were actually becoming converts to Judaism.



But there were grave difficulties in the way. In the larger cities the Jews were viewed with aversion by the common people, in very much the same manner as prevails in Germany and Russia at the present day. In Alexandria at the period of the edicts ordering the cult of the Emperor very serious riots broke out against them, and Philo himself proceeded to Rome in the year 41 to attempt to placate Caligula; the task was not easy, and Philo was lucky to escape from the presence of the Emperor alive.

These riots had proceeded in great part from jealousy of the commercial ascendancy and thrift of the Jews. To this may be added the rooted popular aversion for the Jewish rite of circumcision, which was connected with the stigma of mutilation as a badge of slavery, and which in other ways caused a blind aversion easily turning to hatred. The pretext for the riots was the welcome given by the Jews of Alexandria to Herod Agrippa, who was to become their king a few months later, and their steady refusal to render divine honours to the Emperor. And in this last matter may be noted one of the deepest of the conflicting currents of the age. For just as the Empire was attempting to strengthen its weak constitution by deifying its political head, so the little communities converted by Paul and other missionaries, and following them humanity, were rapidly deifying the crucified Jesus of Nazareth, the redeemer god and saviour of mankind.

As to Philo little more need be said at present. Though not, strictly speaking, one of the Stoics, his



sympathies were with them. His greatest effort was to reconcile the Law and the Prophets with Greek philosophy by a free use of allegorical interpretation; and this effort was destined to make a profound impress on Christian doctrine as it developed during his century and the next. The utterance of Paul might well have been applied to Philo, and it is not impossible he had Philo in mind, when he said: "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." To unite the symbol, the allegory, with the philosophic truth, that was the effort of Philo, and in a sense his effort was not in vain. For the moment, however, these doctrinal and philosophical questions may be left on one side, to view Paul's work on the Roman world.

We have seen that it was in the year 46 that Paul frankly turned from the Jews to the Gentiles. The Jews were difficult to manage; the Gentiles were eager to listen; and Paul was great enough to rise from a Jewish point of view to one that was Roman, or let us even say Stoic, that is as wide as human kind. The extraordinary fortitude and zeal that took him triumphantly through prison, and flogging, and pain, was allied with a cool and tempered outlook and with a natural genius for organization. Leaving the Jews behind him, he set his face towards Rome, and first of all preached unity under the redeemer Jesus. That was the doctrine of an organizer, and of a Roman citizen.

Paul's missionary work lay along the great central line of the Empire's activity, from Syrian Antioch,



through Tarsus, Ephesus, and Corinth, to Rome. In these and many other cities he preached his doctrine, and, as already stated, it was not at all points in accord with that of Jesus. The insistence on the contrast between riches and poverty almost disappears, for in the Asiatic cities the Christian doctrine of Paul appealed to the educated classes, while in Judæa that of Jesus had been placed before the poor. The Jewish element again gradually makes way for the imperial, and Paul abandons circumcision, — let the Jews circumcise and the Gentiles abstain, is his position. And in another particular the same cosmopolitanism appears, for he declares that salvation does not come through the Law, but through faith. His doctrine oscillates between points that are widely separated. On the one hand the resurrection, as he preaches it, is in an immediate bodily sense, at the second coming of the Christ; he distinguishes however the spiritual from the corporeal body in the mystical and angelic manner that the Jews had adapted from the Persian ideas, and that also finds expression in Philo. At the coming of Christ, Paul declares, “then cometh the end . . . when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.”

The last quoted utterance was, of course, extremely seditious; and Paul was usually more guarded. But at heart he, like the Jews all over the Roman Empire, rebelled against the divine claim of the Emperors. And if one must, with insufficient data, attempt to interpret his position, it must be stated thus, — that he accepted as inevitable and even desirable, the unity



of the nations in a Mediterranean empire under a central government, and that he hoped that by preaching Jesus he could eventually turn that Empire from its evil religious course. It was perhaps in this mode of thought that he sometimes uses the words free and freeman; he views himself as free from all religious and governmental obligations because he follows the Christ, who means eventually, at the second coming, to overturn all religions and government. His doctrine here, if the interpretation be a correct one, is very close to the purely philosophic one of Philo who argues that the pursuit of virtue is the means of acquiring spiritual freedom.

Paul's mission was highly successful. Everywhere he left congregations of zealous, highminded converts. He gave them rules of conduct, for with Paul, unlike Peter, the stress was always on ethical values and never on the miraculous; he was the practical organizer of revolted conscience to which he tendered a mystic but adequate formula. He advised his followers to refer their differences to their own tribunals, thus avoiding all connection with the local administrations. To keep the flock together in unity of belief and action he wrote letters to the Churches, and these are the earliest Christian writings, to this day the chief record of the early steps of the new religion. He carried his work as far as Rome, where he died possibly in the year 67 under the Emperor Nero. The vague traditions of the Church assert that he was put to death, and give him rank as a Martyr.

It was at this moment that the Jews of Palestine fin-



ally turned against the Roman government in an access of patriotic and religious frenzy. The ensuing struggle lasted four years, and had some influence on the development of the new religion. The Christian Jews, or Ebionites as they were called, from *ebion* "poor," had continued the early tradition of the Christ cult more closely than Paul and the romanizing Jews. But their leaders showed little power or ability. Peter alone among them made some advance; Paul seems to have influenced him deeply, and to have half persuaded him to adopt his own cosmopolitan position. Peter went through many hesitations, and it is possible that the Church tradition is true that makes him visit Rome, and end his days there. At all events that tradition gave Rome a direct connection with the two foremost Christian preachers, a connection she firmly claims even to this day.

Apart from Peter, the Ebionites continued a despised Jewish sect. They initiated a controversy not by any means closed as to whether Jesus was the son of Joseph or the son of God. They sent out missionaries and made converts in Babylonia, Arabia and Egypt, even in Syria. They were wellnigh destroyed when Titus sacked Jerusalem. They carried Christianity eastward after that event, and became the starting-point of several other obscure sects.



## CHAPTER VI

FROM A.D. 70 TO A.D. 312

IT was during the close of Paul's life, just as the Jews of Judæa were being driven to the point of rebellion by the pressure of Rome, that the writings of the New Testament came into existence. Precise dates are highly controversial, and some variations amount to half a century or more, but an historical view sufficient for the present purpose can probably be attained without raising any question of detail.

In one sense the Christian writings appear to have begun very soon after the death of Jesus. Men began to jot down, in Aramaic or Greek, sayings that were attributed to him. Such sayings were transmitted from Palestine to Egypt and Asia Minor, or were evolved locally, and in the new surroundings were again repeated and reproduced. But so far as one can judge, on extremely scanty evidence, this process in its first stage went little further than the accumulation of sayings; there was not, for some little time, a biography.

Apparently Paul applied the stimulus that changed this state of things. From thirty to forty years after the death of Jesus, Paul's work was reaching its culmination. He was succeeding in the establishment of a network of little communities through the heart of the Roman world, from Antioch to Rome, and all



his efforts were bent on holding them together. Hence his epistles, — singularly eloquent, fervent, let us say inspired letters, — pleading with his followers for union, morality, and faith in the Christ. In these letters, with so direct an aim in view, Paul confined himself pretty well to his immediate object, and referred but infrequently to the history of the Christian sect, and to that of its founder.

But the need for some authoritative record became more and more felt as time slipped by, and as the sect became greater in numbers and more widespread; and this need was met. Accounts of the life of Jesus were written, of which some have not survived, and others that did survive were eventually excluded from the accepted canon of the New Testament; the period during which these early lives of Jesus were composed may be roughly dated from the middle of the first to the beginning of the third century.

The earliest of these texts that we have are the gospels named after Matthew, Mark, and Luke; they are three versions largely founded on the same material, and possibly derived in part from an earlier source, a collection of the sayings of Jesus with a few traditions as to his life added to them. These synoptic gospels, as they are called, are now by most scholars referred back to the authorship of Luke. Without attempting to discuss a point that is incapable of definite proof, the generally accepted fact will be used here, though it is not decisive in itself of any of the more important issues.

Luke then, appears to have been a Greek physi-



cian, and a convert and companion of Paul. He expressly declares that he was not a direct witness of any of the scenes he relates, and that he has no special authority to relate them. He undoubtedly was a compiler, and that partly from written sources, partly from oral tradition; his work was probably done at Rome, and perhaps not until after the capture of Jerusalem by Titus in the year 70.

Let us now consider the general character of the synoptic gospels, and compare it with what has just been said as to the conditions of their authorship. There are two ways of approaching them, each one extreme and not truly historical; between these lies a mean that may possibly lead to some degree of historical satisfaction. First of these ways is the ecclesiastical, which lays down the fundamental position that the writings of Luke and his fellow workers were divinely inspired. Why Luke, who formally disclaims authority, who stumbles and contradicts, who embellishes and falsifies, should be declared to be inspired, is not worth considering. Such a position is either to be accepted or rejected, it is not susceptible of serious discussion. The plain fact is that nothing could be more human, more appealingly human, than the gospels, with all their contradictions, naïveties, realism, aspirations, lapses of intelligence and inadequacy. The other approach is in that extreme form of scholarship which, in its anxiety to criticize, over-reaches itself; it leads, with certain German and Dutch writers, to wholesale rejection almost as unconvincing as the wholesale acceptance of the old-



fashioned churchman. But the first and most difficult task of criticism is that of estimating the whole, and it is only when the outline is fairly seen that it becomes profitable to rectify details. And so the first task with the gospels is to try to seize their larger proportions.

In this broad sense the genuineness of the synoptic gospels as to the general character of the sayings of Jesus, apart from his life, has already been discussed. These sayings make a large proportion of the whole; they are of a markedly individual character, and in the main thoroughly consistent. That gives them, in the absence of some proof to the contrary, an authoritative character.<sup>1</sup> It also accords with the curious fact that during the first two centuries the fathers of the Church always laid stress on this aspect of the gospels, passing more lightly over the statements as to the life of Jesus.

Even at this point it may be remarked, however, that the sayings of Jesus reported by the gospel writers show in places their reporters' lack of interpretative ability, and also that the material was brought together from various sources. For these sayings had rapidly taken on colour from the circle to which they had penetrated, as for example, in that discovered in Egypt in which a variety of pantheistic mysticism is found, that could hardly have been picked up on the banks of Jordan: "Raise the stone and there thou shalt find me, cleave the wood and there

<sup>1</sup> The reader will doubtless observe that this range of facts would fit an earlier Jesus equally well.



am I." But without pursuing this matter further, let us turn to the points where criticism becomes essential.

The case against the gospel writers is clear. They contradicted one another; they distorted facts; they inserted accounts of miracles; and they inserted pure myths. But though the case is clear, it cannot be judged by the standards of to-day, and before coming to any adverse conclusion, the standards and conditions of their own day must be considered.

Few people realize what a recent development is accuracy in historical and literary method. Not more than half a century ago the editors of texts considered it their literary duty or privilege to improve their author by suppression and even by change. If this sort of thing was constantly done by upright and conscientious men in the first half of the nineteenth century, is there any difficulty in imagining that equally upright and conscientious men living in far less critical and learned surroundings, using languages and modes of thought in which hyperbole, embellishment and mysticism were ingrained, transgressed in a somewhat similar way? For that is precisely what will have to be postulated.

The age was not learned; the Christian writers, with the exception of Paul, did not belong to the high intellectual class; allegory was the fashion, was indeed the meeting-place of Hebrew and Greek; Oriental imagination drew no clear line between fact and fiction, — Oriental wisdom had possibly perceived that such a line never could be drawn. The pagan cults had from



time immemorial reposed on a basis of universally accepted miraculous fraud; and Luke, sitting at his desk in Rome, may fairly be assumed to have been even more eager to accept the tale of a miracle from a fervent Christian, than a fervent Christian of to-day is to accept the same tale from Luke. It was even more true then than it is now that men believe what they want to believe; and there lies the simple explanation that covers not merely the synoptic gospels, but a great mass of literature of all ages, all climes, and all creeds.

We may say, then, that in all good faith, the gospel writers dealt with the facts relating to the life of Jesus precisely as men of their time might have been expected to. Where Mark states that a young man stood in the tomb of Gethsemane and told the woman who sought for Jesus that he was gone into Galilee, and Luke states that it was two young men, Matthew piously evokes an earthquake to roll the stone back, and metamorphoses the young man into an angel of the Lord. The facts about the life of Jesus previous to his ministry being probably shrouded in almost complete obscurity, the same religious myths that had done duty for Zoroaster and for Buddha, that were inextricably bound up with the cult of the deities of Asia and Egypt from Cybele to Isis, were made to serve for the new God; and in the virgin conception of Mary the miraculous nature of her son was happily made to blend with the oldest mythological illusions of the people of the Mediterranean.

But why pursue this theme into its innumerable



details, when the line of thought is clearly enough indicated? Are we to believe, for instance, that the devil carried Jesus from the wilderness to the pinnacles of the Temple at Jerusalem, and there showed him and offered him the kingdoms of the earth? Or are we to sweep this out of existence as merely untrue? Or are we not rather to see in it a traditional legend of Zoroaster, current among the Jews, and thus filtering naturally, almost properly, into the new Christian legend? Can there be any doubt of the answer?

The Christians of let us say the year 70, needed not only an account of Jesus, but also one of the preaching of his doctrine by his first successors, and this led to the composition of the Acts of the Apostles. The synoptic gospels had been written far less to establish precise biographical details than to confirm and strengthen the new faith; and the Acts must be viewed in a somewhat similar way. The authorship is a matter of considerable difficulty, and the date may possibly be a good deal later than that of the gospels. Be that as it may there are two broad currents to be easily distinguished running through the book, as well as a minor streak of harmonizing deftness: the first is Petrine, the second is Pauline. Peter and Jerusalem are mostly to be found in the early passages, keyed closely to the tradition of Jesus, with the emphasis constantly thrown on the miraculous powers of Peter, on Judaism, and on the struggle of the poor. Paul and the Empire are mostly to be found in the later passages, with far less emphasis thrown on the miraculous, on the poor, on Judaism;



and they contain the new message to the intelligent and upright citizens of the Roman world.

We may now summarize this earliest group of the Christian writings. They consisted in: numerous scattered sayings and accounts of Jesus; the epistles of Paul; a few other epistles of less interest and importance; the Acts of the Apostles; the three synoptic gospels. These writings were to be largely added to between that day and this, but the canon of the New Testament was already practically formed, save for the Gospel of John, which will receive due notice when we reach the epoch of its composition. Eliminating the very palpable rhetorical embellishments which the zeal of the writers caused them to add to their accounts of the life of Jesus and of Peter, it may be said of these writings as a whole that they are characterized by an extraordinary degree of simplicity, directness, and power. They stand for the impact of the tremendously vital Jewish intellect, with its narrow yet high austerity, and its fanatical devotion, on the widespread humanity of the Mediterranean world. We shall have to see, now, how this great simplicity and directness were soon to be overlaid by the ritualism of Asia Minor and the philosophy of Egypt.

The year 70 may be taken as a convenient date to fix the moment when the Christian sect, as developed by Paul, crystallized its essential elements. It was the year of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the casting out of orthodox Hebraism. The rest,



more than eighteen hundred years, is merely struggle to exist, success, possession, and, at the last, decay. And in the great process we can mark off the next period very sharply at the year 312, when Christianity and Rome, after a long and obscure contest, at last joined hands. How are the phases of this contest to be traced? We will first follow the course of the Empire, and observe its rapidly developing weakness both in its external relations and in its internal affairs. We shall then note its continuous hostility to Christianity, and its religious effort in an opposite direction. After which we will turn to the Church itself and follow the growth of a central creed and organization amid contending schemes of Christian faith.

We have already seen with what rapidity the establishment of a military dictatorship had developed the worst features of autocracy. The power seized by Cæsar and by Augustus had at first been of advantage to the Roman world. Even Tiberius, whatever his faults, had given the provinces a strong and beneficent administration. But with Caligula, Claudius, Nero, and Domitian, came the moral collapse of the one-man institution; for it must be borne in mind that the moral collapse of these individuals was merely the supreme symptom of the moral collapse of a whole civilization beneath them. It is no epigram to say that the Emperors were the representative men of their day.

With the Empire in this situation so early as the



close of the first century, the two hundred years that followed were a constant struggle for equilibrium, with oscillations one way or the other. The first favourable reaction set in with the reign of the Emperor Nerva in the year 96 and lasted nearly a century. During this long period several Emperors of great strength of character occupied the throne, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius. Military vigour and administrative ability were the rule, and, on the whole, the Empire seemed to prosper.

The death of Marcus Aurelius and the accession of Commodus, in 180, closed the epoch, for with the new Emperor the world was once more in bad hands. His pernicious reign was one of disintegration, and the Empire, in its first or pagan form, never recovered from its effects. After Commodus it is one long period of internal anarchy until Constantine attains power in 312, — a period of anarchy with short intervals of respite, such reigns as those of Septimius Severus, Severus Alexander, Aurelian and Diocletian.

During these centuries the Roman military power gradually declined, while at the same time it became more and more the main prop of the Empire. The technique of the art of war passed from Roman to Greek intellects; the Roman and Italian contingents gradually grew smaller while those from the outer bounds of the Empire became larger; the Mediterranean man slowly became less and less able to support the weight of the old Roman armour and to wield the sword and the pilum that had subdued the



world; defensive tactics, a huddling of masses behind breastworks of bucklers, replaced the extraordinarily mobile, energetic, and offensive formations of the legion of the great days. The old armour and arms disappeared in the second century; before the close of the third, the Emperor Probus had flung the ranks of the legions wide open to German mercenaries.

But while this was happening, the army had become, to an even greater extent than at the time of Cæsar, the ruling factor in the State. Augustus had created the Prætorian cohorts, an imperial guard of 9000 men, which his successors increased. These troops dominated the city of Rome, and in time came to dominate the Emperor himself. After the death of Pertinax in 193, they even put the throne up to auction, a simple and not illogical solution for the interregnum that had occurred. It was not until the reign of Constantine that their commanding influence ceased, that Emperor disbanding them, and leaving Rome to found a new capital.

It was not only in this direct sense that the military character of the Empire had become more and more emphasized, but in another equally vital. As Rome in her early days had turned to the conquest of Greece, Italy had gained internal peace; as the zone of conquest had been pushed into Asia Minor, in turn Greece had benefited; and so after Greece, Asia Minor. The pacific periods and countries of the early period had been secured by pushing back the circle of warfare. But along the borders of the Empire fighting was



as continuous as it had been in the old days among the cities of Italy or Greece. And it was not very long before the huge frontier of the Emperors was found to be too lengthy and too remote to be securely held. By the time of Christ the attainable had been reached, and the German tribes of the north had already inflicted a signal disaster on the legions, which rolled them back from the Elbe to the Rhine. From that moment, the very beginning of the Christian era, the tendency for the northern tribes to break through the frontier was felt. In vain did the Romans fortify the Rhine and Danube, and build a wall to join the two great rivers; the pressure was irresistible. Scarcely a half-century passed without some irruption, generally through those countries now known as Croatia and Bosnia, while in the third century more than once large armies penetrated into Gaul and into northern Italy threatening the very life of the Empire. Under those circumstances military defence was the essential feature of government, and the successful soldier Aurelian may be taken as the best type of Emperor produced by the conditions of the close of the epoch that we are now considering.

The descending course on which Rome was running was felt by most of her rulers who deserved power and even by some who only exercised it. And it may be hazarded, for the sake of stating the case in general terms, that those who did deserve power revealed the fact by the manner in which they attempted to react. In many cases, with Emperors who were soldiers and little else, the reaction was merely the



vigorous effort to obtain military and administrative efficiency, as with Titus, or Trajan, or Septimius Severus. With others the reaction, or the effort to affirm the authority of the Emperor, the sanctity of the Empire, took an ethical or religious turn.\* And among these Domitian may stand for the blind and vindictive assertor of the divinity of the Emperors; Marcus Aurelius for the lofty devotee of the Stoic philosophy, in the pursuit of the precepts of which he sees the hope of saving humanity; Aurelian for the soldier reformer, who believes that a new religion may save the Empire, and who attempts to establish one. Let us view these cross-currents a little more closely.

The persecution of the Christians was a constant factor in the situation, from a very early date. For the Christians were, in a sense, a continuation of the Jews, and the Jews, alone of all the nationalities that made up the Empire, had in them certain characteristics that were incompatible with that Empire. No reasonable man can doubt, after reading Tacitus and the scanty contemporary allusions to the Jews, that they held a special and well-marked place, and that they were viewed with fear, hatred and contempt. Even Luke clearly disliked the Jews. What were the reasons for this feeling? They have already been stated, but may as well be summarized once more. Those reasons were their exclusiveness, the manner in which they kept aloof from their neighbours in all matters religious, ethical, or social; their national law, more sacred for them than the imperial



law, and becoming, with the Christian sect, the law of the Church; their abhorrent practice of circumcision; and specially with the Christians, the cult of an individual as God, with its direct challenge of the imperial cult of the Emperors; the centralizing and unifying tendency of the sect, again challenging Rome in its imperial function.

With such elements of antagonism it was inevitable that a collision should come. And as the small sect of the Christians was at the beginning so closely identified with the Jews, it was natural that at first there should be a good deal of confusion between the two. The earliest persecutions can only be seen rightly in their connection with the effort of the Empire to make the Jewish nation render divine honours to the Emperor. In 64 Nero ordered what is known as the first persecution; it was directed against both Jews and Christians. In 93 Domitian followed his predecessor's example, and in this case we may note one or two special points: that the Emperor's wrath was directed against Jews, Christians, and philosophers; that apparently a few members of his immediate entourage and even family had been influenced by the new doctrine; and that with this Emperor there was the greatest stress laid on his own divinity and its cult.

More incidents followed, — one of wide repute concerning Trajan and Pliny, — but none really illustrative of the matter until the year 135. Then occurred the last revolt of the Jews in Judæa, and as a consequence the Roman government, having reasserted its



authority, decided to raze the city and to build on the site a colony, *Ælia Capitolina*. In this way it was hoped that, deprived of a national focus, the Jews would cease troubling the Empire. And, in fact, they did, though their great religious offspring, now nearly fledged, was destined to cause the Emperors many more misgivings and difficulties.

Marcus Aurelius, who reigned from 161 to 180, came into direct conflict with the Christians. But the reason for this was unlike that of Domitian. Where Domitian had the arrogance that so often accompanies youth and crude political achievements, Marcus Aurelius had attained to Stoic humility. Where Domitian through pride and through fear sought to enforce compliance, Marcus Aurelius attempted to secure it through the instinct of the good administrator and the zeal of the philosopher. He could not suffer the existence of a sect that would not conform; he despised a doctrine which to his elevated mind, steeped in the theories of Zeno, appeared a degraded and absurd superstition. So he persecuted Christianity, and that twice, but in vain.

There were other persecutions, notably that of Decius in the middle of the third century. And then, in 270, came the brief and brilliant reign of Aurelian. This Emperor, born in the valley of the Danube, and son of the priestess of an Oriental divinity, had forced his way to the front like so many of his predecessors by his military talents. In four years of power his extraordinary energy cleared the Germans out of northern Italy, gave Rome the protection of a forti-



fied wall, restored a great part of her ancient frontier, and won for him the title of *Restitutor Orbis*. But Aurelian was more than a soldier, he was a zealot. Like the Jew, or the Christian, he had an exclusive and cherished belief; and he attempted to reconstruct the Empire on a new religious basis. To understand the work of Aurelian it will be best to view the general movement of the pagan cults during the epoch we are now considering, and this will be better left to another chapter.



## CHAPTER VII

FROM A.D. 70 TO A.D. 312 CONTINUED

THE contact of Rome with the East during five centuries, B.C. 200 to A.D. 300, resulted in a constant infiltration of Oriental cults into western Europe. The movement of ideas, especially religious ones, was markedly from east to west, not from west to east. For behind Greece lay Asia Minor, Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, India; behind Rome lay nothing more than the newly civilized parts of Europe, Spain or Gaul, with nothing to give save for a time economic and military assistance. And this movement of ideas was, for geographical and economic reasons, chiefly along the route that Paul had frequented, Syrian Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, the route that naturally carried the Orient to the city of Rome. Let us now see how this movement had affected the religion of the great Mediterranean capital.

In their origin the Roman and Greek cults were closely akin; in their developments totally unlike. Without tracing the early stages of their evolution it may be said that the Roman gods were those of agriculture and of the home, multiplied to a great number and served with a highly elaborated ritual. The Romans did not allow their imagination to run riot in their pantheon as the Greeks did, but, following their national bent, set to work to organize their



cults. They threw the emphasis on ceremonial and developed a network of religious custom that clothed every event of life with its due accompaniment of ritual. Thus a vast and precise religious machinery was built up, which, though wholly external, was sufficient to hold many generations steadfast in their beliefs. And indeed it is no great exaggeration to say that that machine may still be witnessed in full operation in the Latin countries.

But it is important to remember that the Roman religion in its pagan form was not exclusive. If Mars was god of the city and Vesta goddess of the household, this did not exclude the idea that some new god or goddess might not preëempt some other attribute. And, in fact, as the Roman conquests extended, so did their pantheon, a process not very injurious until the bounds of Italy and Greece were overstepped and Rome actually touched the East. Then came some considerable changes.

A shrine was erected to the Greek sun god Apollo as early as 432 B.C. In 291 the worship of Esculapius was introduced. After 200 the Greek mythology penetrated completely, and it should not be forgotten that the Greeks themselves were at this time much under the influence of the Orient. Following the Asiatic custom women were admitted more freely to the mysteries of religion while certain Asiatic cults began to play a prominent part, none of them more than that of Cybele.

Cybele was the great mother of the gods, the chief divinity of Phrygia and many parts of Asia Minor.



She stood for the fertility of Nature; her festivals were often accompanied by orgiastic rites; she was sometimes represented with many breasts, or again holding a child in her arms; and with the Greek and Roman conquests of Asia she took on some modifications. Perhaps her greatest shrine was at Ephesus where the Greeks called her Artemis, that is, Diana. But Diana was chaste and Cybele fruitful, and so Artemis of the Ephesians, whose temple was one of the wonders of the world, was half virgin, half mother, combined the two adorable conditions of the goddess woman. Her cult at Ephesus was one that drew thousands of travellers and pilgrims. It was surrounded with great magnificence, and was in large part conducted by eunuch priests.

From Ephesus, many years before Paul carried Christianity along the same path, the worship of Cybele spread to Rome, and from Rome to Italy. In the north she was generally Cybele, the Magna Mater; in the south she was mostly merged into Diana, the prevailing cult of Naples with that of Apollo. But without attempting to note minor differences one may place the date of the introduction of the cult of Cybele into Italy at the second century before Christ, and state that under the Emperors it had become very prominent. The castrate priests of the Magna Mater held the privilege of begging; lamps burned at her shrines, erected by every roadside; her festival of *Hilaria* was the most joyful of the year. And after the great fusion that the Emperor Constantine effected this all continued, and continues to this day,



save in its names; for Cybele gradually and reluctantly became Mary, and Hilaria the Carnival. In Asia, too, the Virgin Artemis was still worshipped in the fifth century as the mother of God, in the paganized Christian Church; while even to this day it is said that a shrine of the goddess survives near Lake Hoiran that yearly draws a few obscure Christian devotees.

With Cybele was connected the god Attis, as with Astarte Adonis, and also various myths of fluctuating character, among them that of the new birth and the remission of sins through baptism, a belief prevalent also among the Jews, as witnessed by John the Baptist. And again may be noted that in the early Phrygian cults Attis was the son of a virgin mother, the goddess Nana. And of these hellenized Asiatic gods, of such chameleonlike, interchangeable personality and attributes, Cybele and Attis made the greatest mark in Italy, Adonis and Astarte the least.

And Egypt too was to contribute her quota. Her great goddess Isis possessed many attributes in common with Cybele and Astarte, as well as others peculiar to the Egyptian mythology. To her was joined the god Osiris, identified with the sun god Ra, whose chief mystery or myth, that of death and resurrection, was similar to that of his Syrian neighbour Adonis. In later times Horus was joined to these two by the force of the Trinitarian idea then prevalent in Egyptian theology. But it was Isis that took the chief place.



In Egypt, as in Asia, hellenization took place. The riotous imagination and latent scepticism of the Greeks acted as a corrosive solvent on the ancient mythologies. For the scantiest of reasons they identified Isis, as they had Astarte, with Demeter, who in turn was identified with the Latin Ceres. In due course, though Egyptian influence spread to Rome far more slowly than Asiatic, Isis made her way to the capital of the Empire. And it may be that her first popularity there was due to the fact that among other attributes of fecundity she held those of wheat or bread, the product of the inundations of the Nile, the support of the Roman capital. But as her cult prospered and became that of the fashionable ladies of Rome, so this same disintegrating influence of the Greek imagination began to reduce her functions to an absurdity by mere multiplication. Here are the attributes which a poet of the second century A.D. puts into the goddess' mouth: "I am the universal Mother Nature, Mistress of the elements, first born of the ages, supreme Goddess, Queen of names, Ruler and sole emanation of all divinities, whose glance makes awful silence in the shining heights of heaven, in the deeps of Ocean, and in the under world; whose immutable being is variously worshipped, with many rites, in many names, as Mother of the Gods, Cecropian Minerva, Paphian Venus, Dictynnian Diana, Stygian Proserpine, the ancient goddess Ceres, Juno, Bellona, Hecate, Rhamnusia,—but whose true name is Queen Isis."<sup>1</sup> And an inscrip-

<sup>1</sup> Apuleius, *Golden Ass*, Met. XI.



tion declares: "I am that which is, which has been, and which shall be. My veil no one has lifted. The fruit I bore was the Sun."

Let us summarize the situation of Rome and Italy in the matter of religion as it might appear in the third century. The old mythology, weakened by too frequent infusions, had lost a great part of its hold; it no longer made the appeal to citizenship that was possible in the remote days of the tribe or city state, and it no longer made any appeal to the intelligence. Even the cult of the Emperor, after the century of anarchy that followed Commodus, remained but a thin veneer of custom. As against this, religion, especially under Oriental influences, had taken on more striking ceremonial aspects, had been blended with the artistic and with the fashionable life of Rome. And ritual such as that of the tonsured, bead-telling monks of Isis, happily combined with innate superstitions and love of mystery, had become ingrained, rooted in the habits of the people. Nothing could eradicate the ritualistic expression of religionism.

One word more, which is this. The confusion, the jumble of deities and of their attributes and myths which had grown up in five hundred years, had had a twofold effect. In one direction it had gradually rendered the outline of each of the deities less and less definite, more and more convertible into different terms; in the other it had tended to generalize the myths and to reduce them down to two or three great ones, that seemed to float vaguely beneath this superstructure of gods and goddesses, as the deepest



conceptions of paganism. Among these ideas were that of the Virgin Mother of God, of the death and resurrection of her Son, and of the remission of sins and the entrance into a new life through baptism. It was in the midst of such a religious atmosphere that Aurelian was cast, with the task laid on him of reconstituting the world.

Aurelian was a soldier, and among soldiers the Persian sun god Mithra stood highest at this epoch. Like one or two of his imperial predecessors, Aurelian was a devotee of Mithra, and he attempted to centralize the pagan cults on the sun, of whom the Emperor might seem to be the emanation. Mithra was one of the most ancient myths of the Aryan tribes, and can probably be placed at a period anterior to the division of the Hindus and Persians. Among the latter it is not until after the creation of the Persian Empire in the sixth century B.C. that we begin to get some real view of the god and his cult. He was then apparently identified with various Semitic deities as, for instance, Shamash, the god of atonement and redemption. It was not, however, until after the fall of the Persian and the creation of the Greek Empire that the cult began to crystallize into the form in which it was eventually to become known to the Romans. Its rites spread mostly in the upper valley of the Euphrates, and the Greek monarchs of those regions reveal by the frequency of such names as that of Mithridates how strong a hold the Persian god had obtained. It was while engaged in the conquest of these regions that the Roman armies came into contact



with Mithra and fell under his sway. By slow stages his cult won converts, and from the middle of the second century, when all the Asiatic cults were spreading fast, it had gained a great importance. A hundred years later the Roman army, in which were many Asiatic soldiers, knew no more popular god than Mithra.

The cult of the Persian god was somewhat exclusive, and in part secret. Its adepts formed lodges, and were initiated to seven different degrees, these degrees, as in the Christian orders, being divided into major and minor. The ceremonial and liturgy is scarcely known, but one of the initiations involved a sacred feast in which the devotees partook of a cup of water mixed with wine, and bread, in the form of small round cakes marked with the Latin cross; this higher form of initiation ceremony was known as a *sacramentum*. Among other rites those of inhumation and of baptism deserve a moment's attention.

The burial of the body had long been abandoned by the Greeks and Romans in favour of the more sanitary practice of cremation. But the Semitic people, like the Jews, continued to bury their dead, and this too was the usage of the followers of Mithra. Now incineration, for obvious reasons, tends to minimize the idea of a future life in any but the most refined spiritual sense, an idea too elevated and difficult for ordinary minds. On the other hand, the burial of the body tended in the opposite direction, and, at the epoch we are dealing with, it was closely allied



in the Oriental cults with the idea of the resurrection of the individual in his earthly form. And so it was in Mithraism, which looked to the day of the second coming of its Redeemer god as that of the rising of the dead.

Then there was baptism. This was more than a rite, it was an ordeal; for it was not water but blood that was used. In the ritual of Isis a baptism by total immersion in water was used. In that of Mithra water was also used for ablutions and purifications, perhaps much as in the Roman Church, a vessel holding water being placed at the threshold of the temples. But the chief ceremony was the baptism of blood, a rite of Asiatic origin, which had become prevalent in the Roman cult of Cybele in the second century A.D. In this the neophyte stood under a grating, and supported a shower of blood drawn from a slain bull. To understand the significance of this rite it will be as well to turn first to the myth of the god, and to the symbolism and ethics associated with it.

Mithra was not the Almighty, Ahura Mazda. He was a mediate deity, placed between heaven and earth, with earthly as well as heavenly attributes, a mediator between God and man, a mediator and also a redeemer. Mithra was the offspring of an earthly mother and Ahura Mazda. He was the hero of a number of legends that centred about his labours for humanity and his deeds of soldierly valour. He was also the sun, connected with every astronomical conception, and viewed as conqueror when he en-



tered the constellation of Taurus at his greatest height in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

It was the conjunction of Mithra with the bull, of the sun with Taurus, that gave to his cult its most striking external feature. In every temple the god was represented sword in hand stabbing the bull. And the blood that flowed from the victim was held to fructify all nature, and in the rite of baptism was held to wash men from their sins. Mithra was thus the generator or creator, which, transposed into terms of Greek philosophy, makes him equivalent to the λόγος.

In terms of morality these myths were associated with a high code of personal conduct. Purity tending towards asceticism was inculcated, much as in Stoicism and Christianity. Mithraism had its vestals and its abstinents, though in this matter it may merely have copied what the cults of Christ and of Isis had begun. The Mithraist believed in a future life, in a heaven peopled with angels and a hell replete with highly developed demons expert in all forms of torture. But last of all, there was to be a resurrection of the body at the second coming of Mithra; and the 25th day of December was celebrated as that of his birth, for on that day the sun rose again on the zenith.

At many points, it will be seen, Mithraism coincided with other sun cults. And if the tendencies of

<sup>1</sup> The season coincides with that at which Adonis was supposed to arise into heaven. The underlying conceptions behind these myths are very fluid. From the bull to the paschal lamb and its symbolic use, especially in the Indian cults, the transition is slight.



four or five centuries are taken as a whole it may be hazarded that the gradual infusion of Greek and Oriental ideas tended to make of the representative of the sun the universal god of paganism. For this, after all, was the supreme manifestation of nature that could be visualized; most phenomena could be deduced from this central one, and so many divinities tended to become symbolic expressions of the sun. Let us now note some stages in the relations of sun worship with the political organization of the Roman Empire.

The Greek sovereigns of Egypt had been divinized and identified with the sun god Ra. It may be that Antony, husband of Kleopatra, had this attribute attached to him. His successful opponent Augustus was averse to the idea of deification, but could hardly prevent the working of the Egyptian mind along this channel. The first century, however, was not important in this connection, and it was not until the beginning of the third that anything approaching the establishment of the sun cult as the state religion can be found. But with Heliogabalus the scene changes. The Emperor is an Asiatic; he is a high priest of the sun; his name in fact gives us the sun god in a strange combination of the Greek and Semitic Helios and Baal. But the time was hardly ripe, and Heliogabalus was one of the worst of the Emperors; his reign only lasted four years, and was closed by his assassination. Half a century later, however, with Aurelian, sun worship at last came to its own as the state religion.

We unfortunately have little direct information as



to what Aurelian actually accomplished. But apparently his was not an effort to make Mithraism the national cult; that remained an inner circle, closed as before to all but the initiated. Probably, however, the highest adepts of Mithra, the *Patres*, or even *Patres Patrum*, let us say high priests and bishops, took control of a more popular cult of the sun intended for the masses. A temple was probably erected where St. Peter's now stands,<sup>1</sup> and the 25th of December, sacred to the unconquered sun, was turned into a great national festival.

Ten years after Aurelian came Diocletian (284–305), a devotee of Mithra and an able and energetic ruler. With him Orientalism reached its height, the court of Rome became like that of the Persian kings or the later Byzantine monarchs. Diocletian's reign was also marked by the outburst of a great struggle between Christianity and the latter-day paganism, a struggle that ended in the year 312 by the first great political victory of the new sect. But before that struggle can be dealt with, we will first add a word as to the politico-religious conception associated with this sun worship, after which Christianity must be

<sup>1</sup> This is not the accepted view, but there is substantial ground for the conjecture. Æneas Sylvius in his narrative of his election to the Papacy in 1458, writes that his predecessor, Calixtus III, was buried, "in Basilica Sci. Petri . . . in loco quem vocant S. Mariæ Februm, olim Apollinis Templum." This was perhaps a part of the Vatican palace, which later was torn down to make room for the new basilica of Bramante and Michael Angelo. The temple of Apollo, therefore, probably coincided with some part of the southeastern section of the present cathedral.



brought down from the year 70 to 303 when took place the great persecution of Diocletian.

During the three centuries in which we have seen the idea of the deification of the Emperors used for strengthening their power, certain modifications had taken place. Although Oriental example was behind it at the start, yet in the earliest stages perhaps the juristic concept that the deification of the individual raised him above the law was its most important element. In the later phases it is clearly the Oriental, and specifically the Persian ideas that predominate. In these the sovereign is not a god, but over him there is diffused the glory and the grace of God. The sun is the guardian of the Emperor, and the strict doctrine declares that he is not of the same substance as god, though perhaps, and it is infinitely debatable, of like substance. Hence, according to Cumont, the surnames that the Emperors begin to adopt in this later period, — Felix, Pius, and others, denoting the grace that heaven endues them with. These names were in due course to be continued by the Popes, so that the twentieth century may yet revere in a successor of St. Peter an attributive name that declares the almightiness of the grace of Ahura Mazda.

It would be misleading to think of the Christian Church as an organized unit during the period that preceded Constantine. Its course in Asia, in Egypt, in Rome, was in many particulars different. From the time of Paul to the close of the second century Asia Minor was the chief centre of the new



religion. It was Greek in its thought, and though fast developing the ritual and creed that finally emerged at the beginning of the fourth century, and in that particular becoming more strongly organized, in other ways it deteriorated. The Church became larger, more popular, more worldly, and it resisted less strongly the overpowering force of the undercurrents of popular myth, tradition and ceremonial. By the middle or end of the second century Christianity is stronger in numbers, less strong in faith and exclusiveness. The pagan and Christian beliefs tend closer to each other; religion is tolerant, glad to compromise; it becomes almost possible to worship both Jesus and Cæsar.

In the third century, religious communities of Asia Minor unite the cult of God and the Emperor. But the vow to the Emperor is anti-Christian, though it tends in the Christian religion towards unification under a supreme deity; for if the Emperor should turn Christian, then the community would readily shift its allegiance. On the whole there is marked loss of faith in the details of Christian doctrine, but increasing faith in the doctrines that underlie Christianity, and Stoicism, and sun worship, every form of universal and ethical religion. Faith and fashion blend with this an increasing Oriental mysticism translated into terms of Greek philosophy, — and this brings us to Egypt.

So late as the end of the second century there was apparently no settled Christian rite at Alexandria, while the New Testament writings were not yet codi-



fied. This is all the more remarkable when one remembers how close Alexandria was to Jerusalem both in space and in race. It was Asia Minor, the seat of Paul's activity, that had seen the real development, and Rome was the natural goal of Asia Minor. Yet at Alexandria were working certain forces that were to add another great element to the work of Paul. Those forces we have already seen at work in the philosophy of Philo.

The hellenization of Jewish thought in Egypt had begun with the earliest monarchs of the house of Ptolemy and the creation of the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Old Testament. Philo fused the Jewish and Greek philosophy, and shortly after his death, perhaps in the last years of the first century,<sup>1</sup> the new Græco-Jewish mysticism which he had helped to create began to work its way into Christianity in a perceptible and lasting form. One part of this process resulted in the writing of the gospel and the Apocalypse of John, and by John nothing more is meant than a writer of the epoch, for as to whether these works were the actual composition of the apostle John or not is a controversial question that fortunately has no bearing on what will be said here.

The Apocalypse represents the point in the New Testament where the older strain of Jewish prophet-

<sup>1</sup> The date given will perhaps satisfy nobody; for some scholars attempt to place it as early as before A.D. 70, others as late as 135; Baur indeed, even later. After considering their arguments, the statement made here does not seem to mislead in any essential way. The later dates seem open to grave objections.



ism succeeded in retaining a foothold. The book is a composite, both in its literary form and in its religious views, and contains ante-Christian elements. It shows Greek and Alexandrian influence to a very slight extent only, differing in that respect from the gospel, and in places it points directly to the Syrian and Asiatic cults. The two first verses are full of suggestion: "John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the things of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. . . ."

In the Gospel of John we have the work of a practised literary hand, whose statements of fact are often at variance with the synoptic gospels, and for many reasons command less confidence. But the statements of fact are not what is of chief importance in John; it is the doctrine, the beliefs. And first we note the immense extension which the divine idea has taken on. The association of the idea of a redeemer god, like Shamash or Mithra, with Jesus is complete, where in the synoptics it was vague. "Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!" The holy spirit, the grace of God, is visualized as a dove descending from Heaven. But chief of all is the mystico-religious metaphysical conception of Jesus as the *λόγος*, the word of God. But the *λόγος* may be identified with the divine grace of the Persian cults,



with the active principle of the world of the Stoics, with the Divine Reason, the Power of all Powers, the cosmic idea, the beginning, the firstborn son of or second God, — the highest concept of Philo. Though unwavering in his adherence to Judaism, Philo's insistence is more on the Law than on the prophets, more on an all-pervading and incomprehensible deity than on Jehovah; and he deals but slightly with the Messianic prophecies. That is also the character of the gospel of John as compared with the synoptic gospels.

In the thought of Alexandria three stages are clearly marked by Philo, Clement and Plotinus. Philo, the contemporary of Jesus and Paul, we have now done with; Clement lived in the second half of the second century, and his work was the attempt to bring together the philosophy of Philo and Christianity; to make of religion the equivalent of philosophy. Paul had preached that the Law was the teacher that led men to Jesus; Clement substituted Greek philosophy for the Law, which meant in one sense the following out of tendencies that had first appeared soon after the death of Jesus, and in another the intellectualizing of Christianity. But although the history of the Church in Egypt is very obscure before Clement, yet it would appear that in his time it had already become a considerable community so that the placing of Christianity on this basis could lead Clement to no other position than that there must be two Christianities, just as a century later Aurelian and his religious advisers decided that there must be two sun



cults. According to Clement there must be an inner Christianity, a gnosis, or wisdom, of Christianity, for the intellectual aristocracy, and a popular Christianity for the masses. Let us view each of these aspects of the case

First of all, what were the essential features of Clement's teaching and how far did it affect the Church? One of the fundamental positions of the new religion was already that the redemption of men's souls from sin was effected through faith in Jesus Christ. This doctrine was intellectualized and refined by Clement into this, that the human spirit was redeemed from the evil influence of material things by the study of religious knowledge. Converted into different terms this meant that salvation depended on the study of the literature of Christianity in the same spirit that the Alexandrians had for so long been criticising and distorting the texts of Homer, and Plato, and Æschylus. The first duty of man was no longer plainly to carry out the code of practical ethics laid down by Christ and Paul, but it was rather to become united with the Primal Cause through gnosis and the separation of the spirit from the body.

This scheme of religion partly failed and partly succeeded. Gnosticism, in its various forms, was soon rejected as a heresy. The great middle stream of Christianity swept by leaving it to eddy on one side. And probably the principal reason for its ill success may fairly be stated in these terms, that instinctively those who guided Christianity realized that the re-



ligion was imperial, for all men, and that there lay its force. Gnosticism could never be much more than a mode of thought, a possible rival of Stoicism. And yet, even if Gnosticism was destined to fail as a system, it was not without influence. Its tortuous interpretations and mystical character tended more and more to filter into the Christian creed, while Clement was merely the precursor of Plotinus.

Plotinus was born in the year 205, shortly before the death of Clement. But although he carried the thought of his time beyond the point it had already reached, it was as a pagan and not as a Christian. The underlying tendencies were the same, however, and Plotinus was a great factor in forming the Christian creed. Most of his teaching was done in Rome where, during an evil period in which the Empire appeared to be fast sinking, he drew to his lectures the men and women of conscience and higher aspirations who were yet to be found in the capital of the world. In a sense, his teaching was the continuation of that of Philo, of the Stoics, of Clement, but his school became known as that of the Neo-Platonists because his principal line of thought derived directly from Plato's dualistic conception. He sought unity by combining the Oriental doctrine of the emanations of the Almighty with the Platonic doctrines, and so powerful were his concepts, that pagan Greek philosophy in this its latest form was to stand up as a formidable rival to Christianity for another two hundred years and more.

The unity that Plotinus strove for was an idea long



current in Greek thought, curiously expressed in its art, and in a certain perversion which that art loved to dwell on. The same idea found ample literary expression, and, in the highest philosophical form such as Plotinus gave it, turned on the merging of the subjective with the objective. This was achieved in the conception of an objective Trinitarian God, a most ancient Egyptian religious idea, closely akin to the *λόγος* of Philo and John; and in the striving for the absorption of individual man into the incomprehensible Trinity through contemplation. This divinity, — Unity, Trinity, Primitive Light, — contained within it three *ὑποστάσεις*, or forms. It was not to be thought of as a concrete thing, but as the principle of all things. Such were the ideas that Plotinus taught in Rome at the close of the third century, in the years immediately preceding the accession of the Emperor Aurelian. And those ideas spread chiefly in the class that was soon to give Christianity many of its best recruits.

The evidence is pretty clear that for nearly two hundred years after Paul the growth of Christianity was very slow, but that about the middle of the third century a rapid increase took place. At the close of that century Christianity had become a direct menace to the Empire and a struggle was entered on that almost openly took on this character. The persecutions of the Christians under Nero and Domitian had been cruel blows aimed at a despised and hated sect in which Judaism appeared to be the chief constituent. But in 135 A.D. Christianity sloughs off Judaism, and takes on an almost purely Greek aspect. Persecution



relaxes. The sect is still small, but organizes and pushes out into the western parts of the Empire where it was to find its strongest elements. In 250 comes the persecution of Decius, an attempt by striking at the heads of the Church to put down a criminal cult, — criminal in that it forbids the national cult of the Emperor. And when persecution begins again, in a much more drastic form under Diocletian, in 303, it is because the Church is so rapidly increasing in numbers that the Emperors are definitely threatened in their very existence.

In trying to understand the reason for this great increase of the Christians, we can only be concerned here with the movement of the larger causes, if we can succeed in estimating them fairly. The visible decline of the Empire, the ceaseless succession of wars and pestilence, the economic breakdown that marked the third century, all tended to turn men's minds from material success to moral consolation. The unification of paganism on sun worship did not fully accomplish its objects; it could not quite supply an ethical standard for the mass, nor could it quite revivify the older idea of the divinity of the Emperor. And in any case, at the close of the third century, the efforts of the Emperors to keep things together had taken a new turn; the Empire had been divided into two, three and even six parts, in the hope of thus securing efficient administration. Such a division could not assist the central religious idea connected with sun worship.

In the civil wars that followed the abdication of



Diocletian (305) it may be inferred that Christianity played what proved in the outcome to be the decisive rôle. The violent persecution of Diocletian had set an object for the Christians to attain, an object now not beyond their reach. Their numbers were important. In Italy, and Gaul, and Britain they were recruited mainly from the upper classes, soldiers, administrators, merchants. Their organization was exclusive, and gave advantages for concerted action in many towns, in many provinces. If for instance, the word was passed through the Christian churches of Britain that its members should offer a tacit opposition to a governor or Emperor, — that might be a political factor of the gravest moment.

The civil war lasted six years, and saw six claimants to the Empire. In the year 312, as Constantine with the legions of Britain and Gaul marched on Rome, held by his rival Maxentius, he decided to adopt Christianity. With attendant miracles similar to those which Castor and Pollux had performed many centuries earlier for the army of the infant republic, Constantine swept his rival away and entered Rome, to plant there the sign of the so-called Latin cross, which still remains there after sixteen hundred years. The action of the one all important individual in the Empire had suddenly altered the whole complexion of things, and Christianity had now accomplished the last stage of the difficult journey from Jerusalem to Rome.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CONVERSION OF CONSTANTINE

THE tendencies of Christianity had changed during these three centuries of its existence. At first, in the hands of Peter and his Jewish followers, the second coming of Jesus had been its chief article of faith. That belief had gradually become less prominent in the course of three hundred years and with the conversion of Constantine something totally different replaced it, which was the triumph of Christianity. At the beginning of the fourth century this was the great preoccupation, this was the great fact. In 312 the Emperor is converted; in 313 he issues a decree placing Christianity on an equality with the other religions of the world. But Christianity rejects equality, and the question really is, will it move from the new vantage-ground to the complete defeat of paganism?

The organization of the Church too had changed. In the early days there had been merely congregations after the Jewish manner, centring on a synagogue or similar building, in which individuals took the lead as interpreters of the Scriptures. And among such individuals a few greater ones, apostles, missionaries, were viewed as leaders, and, from the earliest times, some of them had been roughly designated as commissioners or overseers, — *ἐπίσκοποι*, whence our



modern word bishop. Another word of the same kind was in very early use, presbyter, or priest, but at first there was no strict differentiation between presbyter and bishop, and no definition of their vague functions; while the Pauline writings show clearly that the practice of the early Christians was to settle their affairs by the vote of the whole congregation.

But the tendency asserted itself to delegate and vest this power in the leaders. By the end of the second century the priest and the bishop were fully developed into much the same functions and relations as those which hold to-day. The priest was ordained by the bishop, though occasionally as late as the fourth century by other priests, and the bishop was elected by his people, and ordained and anointed by another bishop.

In the city of Rome a small Christian community was already in existence when Paul journeyed there, and when Peter, perhaps, did the same. That community went through great vicissitudes; it was long obscure, small, and exotic, — that is, Greek-speaking. Yet it clearly had a continuous existence. It occasionally emerges into historical light with personages whose record has reached the present age. It must of necessity have gone through the same sort of evolution as the other Christian communities; and after the middle of the second century the facts concerning it may, in a rough way, be ascertained. The Roman Church, however, has long insisted on the traditional authority conferred on it by an imagined continuity between Peter and Paul and the Popes. It abandons as worthless that real continuity which carries it back



beyond the earliest Pontifex Maximus of Rome to the shadowy priest who defended the sacred grove of Nemi with his life, for a spurious descent from Paul and Ezekiel and the line of the circumcised prophets of Israel. The specific continuity is, in fact, incapable of proof, nor is it important, whatever volume of energy may have been expended in discussing it. The real point is that the Roman Church, when Constantine joined it in 312, was a very different organization from the early Christian communities. As for the theologians who defend the direct succession of its bishops from Jesus through Peter and Paul, it is difficult to refrain from quoting a great controversialist of the eighteenth century who declared of one of his opponents: "There are more traces of a disingenuous mind in Mr. Davis than there are of an episcopal succession in the Epistle of Clement."<sup>1</sup>

The push of the Christians of the western half of the Empire had helped Constantine to win the throne. The question now presented itself as to how the Emperor would repay the debt he had incurred? He came from a family in which Christianity had already obtained a foothold, yet the evidence is fairly clear that there was no strong degree of personal conviction in the step he had taken. It was far more a political than a religious act. But, although it is most probable that self-interest rather than faith prompted the act of Constantine, it inevitably brought about a great change. In thirteen years Christianity took a great stride in advance, by formulating its be-

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, *A Vindication*, . . . p. 1.



liefs at the first general council of the Church held at Nicæa in 325.

Until the Council of Nicæa it cannot be said that Christianity had a definitely fixed creed. There was at best a central line of thought, with a great many congregations more or less removed from orthodoxy. Among these we have already noted the Ebionites and the Gnostics, and to these two may be added the followers of Marcion in the second half of the second century, the Antinomians, Patripassians, Montanists, Novatians, in the third. These, it must be understood, were merely the outstanding variations among many, and now that Christianity had reached the throne an immediate need for avoiding further dissensions was felt.

There was a pressing present case of deviation that required a solution in the interests of peace and harmony, the controversy between Arius and Athanasius. Arius held a doctrine based on a latent recognition of the human nature of Jesus, but tinged superficially by a philosophical mysticism of the same type as that which the teachings of Philo, Clement, and Plotinus had made well-nigh universal among the intellectuals of the age. He believed that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost were not equal and consubstantial (*homoousion*), but that God the Son was only of like nature (*homoiousion*) with God the Father, who was the superior deity.<sup>1</sup> The danger of this doctrine from the Christ-

<sup>1</sup> In the strictest possible sense Arius was less the protagonist of the *homoiousion* position than the opponent of the opposite one.



ian point of view was that it tended to emphasize the supremacy of a universal but unthinkable deity, and therefore to reduce Jesus to a prophetic rank, while the more prevalent mystical doctrine, and one that fitted the hellenization and orientalization of the cults of the Roman world, tended to confuse man and god, and to build around the central figure of Jesus the structure of allegory, myth, and ritual that alone could give concrete symbols and satisfaction to the large proportion of mankind.

During the civil wars that followed the retirement of Diocletian, and with Constantine on the throne, Arius rapidly became the storm centre of Christianity. His influence was strongly disruptive. But the new Emperor was concerned to bring his new religion into the service of the State, and this could only be done by a strict centralization and unification. He frequently presided over meetings of bishops, and tended to create from the Christian episcopal organization a new wheel in the machine of government. But Arianism meant disintegration, and Constantine decided that Christianity must formulate its beliefs into a well-defined, accepted, and enforceable code. To accomplish this end he resolved to call together a council of all the bishops of the Church, the first general or Œcumenic Council. It came together at Nicæa in the thirteenth year of his reign.

Over three hundred bishops, and many hundreds of priests, deacons, and acolytes, gathered at Nicæa. They were for the most part zealous believers, or disbelievers, in the doctrine of Arius. For the first time



the Mediterranean world saw vividly displayed that bastard form of faith, dogmatic conviction, which Europe was fated to inherit from Greece, and to suffer from for so many centuries. One frenzied sect was ready to go to the stake for their belief that God the Father and God the Son were *Homoousioi*, and the other for the belief that they were *Homoiousioi*. Even now, in nearly two thousand years, the world has hardly yet discovered that they were only attempting to measure the most unfathomable of facts with formulas and criticisms adapted to no higher purposes than those of a deplorably decadent school of grammarians. Let us dispose in a few words of what the Church did establish as its creed by the operation of its early councils, so as to leave as soon as possible a subject so humiliating to human intelligence. The Council of Nicæa, under popular pressure, decided that Jesus was ἀληθῶς, truly God, that of Constantinople in 381, that he was τέλειως, perfect man, that of Ephesus in 431, that he was ἀδιαιρέτως, indivisibly God-man, and that of Chalcedon, in 451, that he was ἀχωρίστως, distinctly God and man. Had the Emperors consistently and successfully maintained their divinity, it is probably in about the same terms that the Greeks would have defined it.

The Council of Nicæa further settled some matters of Church discipline and organization, such as the election of bishops, and it gave its name to the Nicene Creed. That creed is too universally known to require statement; it will suffice to say that every element, Christian, pagan, and philosophical, from



which it was compounded has been set forth in these pages. It merely focussed the highly composite Christian beliefs of that age into a standard formula which has retained its efficacy down to our own time.

Arius failed. The struggle was not without vicissitudes, however, and it was long protracted.<sup>1</sup> His enemies found a notable leader in Athanasius, whose creed, a large amplification of that of Nicæa, was also to find its way into the liturgy of the Church. But why dwell on these dogmatic dissensions when the fundamental point, after all, was that the peasant of Galilee, whose speech was Aramaic, whose mind was so simple and direct, would never have recognized in these subtleties, these frantic death struggles of the moribund Greek intellect, the teaching which he attempted to set before mankind. All we need dwell on these creeds for is to see in them a certain landmark, the end of a certain well-defined phase. With them, the formative period of Christianity closes, and the religion has become rigidly constitutionalized.

Connected with the name of Constantine, and with the great changes effected during his reign, are certain other matters that cannot be omitted. His attitude in the religious question was marked by several incidents. On occupying Rome after his victory over Maxentius, he immediately proclaimed himself Pontifex Maximus, head of the Roman religion; and this marks the point of entry of that title and of that of-

<sup>1</sup> Modern unitarianism is only in the remotest possible sense a continuation of Arianism. Historically there is no real connection.



fice, — held as these lines are written by Pope Pius X, — into the Christian Church. In 324 he amplified the decrees favouring Christianity by proclaiming it the state religion, by ordering the temples to be closed, and sacrifice to cease. In 337 he was baptized, an act of seeming faith that came within a few weeks of his death. Alongside of these facts, there were legends of a later period which historical criticism has now swept away, among them that of his baptism by Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, that of his donation of temporal power to the same bishop, and that of the grant of the presidency of the Council of Nicæa to Sylvester's representative there.

In all this not a word has been said so far of paganism and of philosophy. Yet Christianity did not triumph without a struggle, without paying a price. And the price was that, as she suddenly unfolded her arms as a state religion to the people of the Mediterranean world, when she had closed them again she was found to have embraced not only the people of the Empire but all their variegated creeds, and customs, and beliefs. Christianity was markedly composite before 312, but became very much more so in the course of the following century. In fact what happened for the mass of the Italian people was merely the placing of an imperial label marked *Christianity* on all that they had known previously under a variety of other names. Let us view the process, generalizing, within the bounds of a century or so from the year 312, the actual facts that attended the Christianizing of Italy and western Europe.



What are the outward and visible signs of a religion? Its temples and its ceremonies. At the beginning of the fourth century Italy was endowed with a multitude of temples and with a multitude of ceremonies, dedicated to the myriad deities of paganism. Architecture, music and art, pageantry, mysticism and superstition, all the emotions from riotous joy to private grief or public gloom, found in them a supreme and time-honoured expression. Alone Christianity had lived a life apart, taken no share in these things. Its temples had often been secret, and always humble; its rites had been austere; its interests had been distinct from those of the community and occasionally hostile to them; as yet it had acquired neither popular elements nor national qualities. Yet now, in the space of a few years, the Emperor had decreed that Christianity should supplant paganism. How could such a thing be done?

In the external sense it was not done; for in reality paganism absorbed Christianity. In the inward or ethical sense, the case was different. To understand what happened in the external sense, let the reader first take a typical example of which the facts are in good part known, though partly inferential.<sup>1</sup> At Naples the chief cult was that of Apollo, or the sun. His temple was the most splendid of the city, or perhaps shared that distinction with the temple of Neptune near by. Both these shrines were eventually to be

<sup>1</sup> A good part of the material of this and the few following paragraphs has already been used in the author's *Napoleonic Empire in Southern Italy*, vol. I, chap. I.



included within the walls of the cathedral of S. Gennaro as it now stands after the building and modifications of many centuries. In the year 305, Gennaro, bishop of the Christian community at Naples, was decapitated by the orders of Diocletian, then persecuting the Christians. A few years later, after the edict of Constantine, Gennaro's successor, Severus, caused the body of the martyr to be exhumed and brought to the temple of Apollo, which we may therefore assume had now become a place of Christian worship, — in fact the present chapel of Santa Restituta, an annex of the cathedral, in the fabric of which the columns and masonry of the older temple are to this day plainly visible. A legend soon grew about Gennaro, who was credited with the usual miracles of raising the dead, healing the sick, and so on; and before many years had passed he displaced Apollo in whose sanctuary he had found rest, while Naples was compensated for the loss of a tutelary god by the acquisition of a patron saint. But in the ritual of Apollo divination played a conspicuous part; and we have from Horace the description of a rite of this sort, in this very same part of Italy. The priest placed on the altar a vessel containing a red coagulated substance, probably frankincense, and the oracular result turned on the facility or otherwise with which it liquefied. The scepticism of Horace on the subject was tersely expressed: *Credat Judæus Apella!* In the cult of Gennaro a similar rite has been performed at the high altar of the cathedral of Naples from time immemorial to the present day. And what the sacred



vessel is declared to contain is the coagulated blood of the Saint, who divines the better or worse fortune of his city by allowing it to liquefy with greater or less rapidity.

Such is a peculiarly clear case that exemplifies what was going on throughout the whole Roman world. The central mystery and the central rite of Christianity could be accepted, provided that alongside of it the old mysteries, the old rites, might be retained under a transparent disguise. And the persecutions, particularly the later ones, those of Decius and of Diocletian, had supplied the very material that was required for cloaking the pagan deities with a decent Christian veil. The *Acta Sanctorum* of the zealous Bollandists enumerates over twenty thousand Christian saints, and although Gregory XIII restrained official sanction to no more than twenty-seven hundred, yet even in that reduced number there was ample opportunity for replacing the ancient gods. The imagination of the Christian writers fastened on this good work with such enthusiasm that in one extreme instance they did not hesitate to attribute the life and miracles of Buddha to one of their martyrs who, as St. Josaphat, had the 27th of November apportioned to his honour and his rites.

The pagan sacrifices continued for many years, notwithstanding the edicts of Constantine and the protest of such Christian fathers as Augustine; but the altars at which they were offered were now dedicated to the Christian saints. The pagan liturgies were largely taken over. Only a few years ago Dominican monks



were still addressing the Virgin Mary as: "Queen of Heaven, Queen of Earth, and Queen of Hell," just as their predecessors invoked Diana: "*tergeminamque Hecate, tria Virginis ora Dianæ.*"<sup>1</sup> As late as the fifth century many professing Christians prayed to the rising sun, as devout Mahommedans do now: "O Lord, have mercy on us!" And a Pope even, Innocent I, a hundred years after the cross had been planted in Rome, sanctioned pagan incantations in the streets of the city to preserve it from the attack of Alaric and the Goths.

A few more details of the same general character may help to make the whole process clearer. The date of the birth of Christ, hitherto honoured by the Church in the spring, was transferred to the festival day of the sun, the 25th of December. The other great festivals of the pagan world were touched up with Christian interpretation and symbolism. The Vestal Virgins succumbed, but the Christian virgins continued their distinctive dress;<sup>2</sup> while in Egypt the great monasteries of Serapis became the starting-point of Christian monasticism. Cybele made way for Mary, and her begging priests rapidly spread a custom, developed by the misfortunes of the age into the national vice of Christian Italy. The splendid cult of Isis, with its fashionable appeal, its scientific music, its incense, and its symbolism, easily retained, under a new name, the old fascination that high churchism still continues at the present day. For,

<sup>1</sup> Rolfe, *Naples in 1888*, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Lanciani, *Athenæum*, 1902, p. 305.



to call Isis Mary in the fourth century was scarcely more difficult than to call her the "Mother of the Gods, Cecropian Minerva, Paphian Venus, Dycinian Diana" in the second.

Nor must it be supposed that this transformation was disapproved by the leaders of the Christian Church; they were too deeply engrossed in homoousianism, too profoundly satisfied at their worldly good fortune, to resist the rising tide of relabelled paganism that threatened to engulf them. It was but a very small leaven, though an important one as we shall presently see, that remained staunch to the earlier and simpler ideal. The rank and file of the Christian bishops and fathers lent their aid to the process, and devoted their efforts to this naïve coating of paganism with an external veneer of Christianity. The process continued for many centuries, and from the literature of the Middle Ages we can take an example of precisely what was happening in the fourth century. In this the Christian writer reproduces an ancient tale, and to it more piously than dextrously, tags on a modern moral:

"In the middle of Rome there was formerly an immense chasm which no human efforts could fill up. The gods, being consulted as to this extraordinary circumstance, replied that unless a man came forward willing to plunge into the gulf, it would forever remain open. Proclamations were issued calling for a man willing to sacrifice himself for the good of his country, — but not a man ventured to declare himself. At length Marcus Aurelius said: 'If you will per-



mit me to live as I please during one whole year I will at the end of it cheerfully throw myself into the chasm.' The Romans joyfully agreed, and, for that year, Aurelius indulged every wish of his heart. Then, mounting a noble steed, he rode furiously into the abyss, which immediately closed over him.

### *Application*

"Beloved, Rome is the world, in the centre of which, before the nativity of Christ, was the gulf of Hell yawning for our immortal souls. Christ plunged into it, and by so doing redeemed the human race."<sup>1</sup>

Among the actual witnesses of the great transformation, St. Augustine (354-430) is the one whose writings afford the greatest mass of evidence as to its nature. His efforts to maintain the earlier purity of Christianity are recorded in the *De Civitate Dei*, and one of his arguments, in a much abbreviated form, may serve to close this part of the subject. "Let Jupiter," he says, "be one while the soul of this terrene world, and another while but a quarter ruler with his brethren and sisters: let him be the sky now, embracing Juno which is the air under him. Let him be Jupiter in the sky, Juno in the air, Neptune in the sea's depth, Sol, Luna, and the stars in the spheres, Apollo in divination, in time Saturn, in war Mars, in the corn Ceres, in the woods Diana. Let him be Vaticanus that opens the child's mouth, and Levana that takes up from the mother. Well, on, let him be

<sup>1</sup> *Gesta Romanorum*, Lib. int. lit. iii, 1105.



Jugatine, to look to the hills, and at the loosing of a virgin's nuptial girdle let him be invoked by the name of Virginiensis: let him be Mutunus, which amongst the Greeks was Priapus, but that, it may be, he will be ashamed of. Let Jupiter alone be all these, or, as those hold which make him the soul of the world, let all these be but as parts and virtues of him. If it be so, what should they lose if they took a shorter course and adore but one God?"<sup>1</sup> And the further trend of the argument is clear enough.

And so Christianity wrought the fall of paganism. Decay and death were drawing the old order, like all that is on earth, down into their dark abode. The fair form, the lovely pageant that had entwined the Mediterranean with sculptured marble, and garlands of roses, and human emotion, was fading into stuff for the fantasies of dreamers. The white-robed priest and smoking altar, the riotous procession and mystic ritual, would no longer chain the affections of mankind. No longer would the shepherd blow his rude tibia in honour of Cybele, no longer would a thousand delicious fables, fine-wrought webs of poetic imagination, haunt the sacred groves and colonnades of the gods. Day after day, night after night, for countless centuries, as constantly as Apollo and Diana ran their course in heaven, had all these things run their course on earth; now, under the spell of the man of Galilee, they had shivered into a rainbow vapour, a

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, Book IV, chap. II, Keeley's translation.



mist of times past, unreal, unthinkable, save where the historian may reconstruct a few ruins or the poet relive past lives.

And yet the externals in great part remained. For it was at the heart that paganism was struck, and it was there it was weakest. It had attempted, but had failed, to acquire a conscience, while the new faith had founded itself on that strong rock. Christianity had triumphed through the revolt of the individual conscience; it was now to attempt the dangerous task of creating a collective one.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE LAST ROMAN EMPERORS

THE reign of Constantine was marked by two great events, of which one has so far not been noticed; this was the foundation of Constantinople as a new capital for the Empire. The selection of this site arose from certain deep-set and irresistible tendencies. The position of the city of Rome was excellent so long as she was conquering or triumphant, but the instant the tide began to ebb and the question of defence, of resistance, became uppermost, it was weak; on the other hand, that of Constantinople was admirable in every way. Again, in the growing feebleness of the huge empire the tendency to disintegrate had become more and more marked, and the foundation of a new capital could only result, as it eventually did, in splitting the Empire into two halves, one Latin, the other Greek.

Constantinople soon reacted on Rome. The creation of a new capital immediately displaced the older city from the proud position of mistress of the Mediterranean world which she had held undisputed for five hundred years. At the death of Constantine, the Empire was divided, a repetition of what had so often happened before, but with this difference that now it fell apart into two natural halves, Latin and Greek.

At this very moment the bishops of Rome were fast attaining a prominence they were to retain down



to our own times. The absence of the Emperor from the old capital, which after the beginning of the next century became habitual and before its close permanent, tended to increase the dignity and authority of its bishop. Within little more than half a century, he assumed the title of Pontifex Maximus, left derelict by Emperors who proved unable to exercise the actual headship of the Church. The function of Pontifex Maximus meant the power of appointing priests and the general administration of a religion of which the Emperor was the divine head. But although the idea of the divinity of the Emperor was incompatible with the new system, religious supremacy had at first passed *ipso facto* to the Emperor in his rôle of Pontifex Maximus, and, when he ceased from playing it, to the bishop who took the title over. Nor had there been any apparent reluctance on the part of the Christians to accept this curious solution of the three-hundred-year struggle, for the exalted position of the Emperor had constantly received from them full recognition. If Horace wrote that Augustus must rule the world second only to Jupiter, the Christian father Tertullian, two centuries later, declared that the Emperor "is a man, but a man who comes immediately next to God." The acquisition, therefore, under a venerable title, with countless centuries of traditions, of all that was left of the religious supremacy of the Emperors, was of the utmost significance in the rapid rise to power of the Roman bishops.

There was much else that told in the same direc-



tion. Even before the events of the fourth century the mere fact that Rome was capital had naturally enough increased its bishop's importance. The sun worshipper Aurelian, when faced by a problem of administration involving his Christian subjects, — the case of Paul of Samosata, — referred the matter to the judgment of the bishop of Rome. And with Constantine on the throne, although the extreme claims made by the Roman Church in this matter cannot be substantiated, it is clear that the tendency of the councils was to invest its representatives with some sort of natural leadership. In the fifth century it became usual to give exclusively to that bishop the title of Pappas or Father, hitherto given to all bishops; and this title of Pappas or Pope, which became thoroughly established at the time of Gregory I, may now, for convenience, be applied to the bishops of earlier times.

The pontificate of Sylvester was almost equal to the long reign of Constantine, lasting until the year 337. After his death the Papacy quickly showed the ill effects of the too rapid transition that had taken place. The sacred office was no longer the presidency of a select, at times illegal, association, but one of the chief magistracies of the Empire; and it depended on popular election. The papal office soon became an object of political intrigue and of mob violence; before the end of the century disgraceful faction fights took place in the streets of Rome, and men of worse than equivocal standing were proclaimed as the successors of St. Peter.



Nor was this the only setback suffered by Christianity, for just at this time a new wave of Oriental religionism was coursing westward through the Roman world and seriously threatening its new-gained supremacy. Mani, who gave his name to Manichæanism, was a Persian prophet, born about the beginning of the third century, whose teaching was a blend of the beliefs of Persia, Judæa, and Asia Minor. It laid great stress on the struggle of the principles of good and evil; it developed demonology to an extreme point; and it accepted Jesus as a prophet. Mani's personal history was very similar to that of Jesus; he suffered constant persecution, and was finally crucified in 276. His doctrine spread rapidly through the Roman world, where many unorthodox branches of Christianity gave it recruits, and in the process clothed it in the outward garb of that religion. It was destined to linger on obscurely for many centuries and even to survive into the Middle Ages. Its temporary and short-lived success in the fourth and fifth centuries is ascribed by Harnack to the fact that alongside of its clean-cut dualistic theory of good and evil it professed simple spiritual worship and strict morality. If this view be correct,<sup>1</sup> then one may venture to say that some part of the attraction towards Manichæanism was due to a reaction of the older and more ethical part of the Christian sect away from the paganism that threatened to overwhelm it as a result of the revolution of Constantine.

Manichæanism was not the only enemy; pagan-

<sup>1</sup> But see Cumont's commentary on Theodore bar Khôni.



ism, though struck down, was not yet dead. The edicts aimed against it could not be entirely effective at first. Even if the populace could be brought over by large concessions in external matters, the intellectual minority, massed about the strong nucleus of Neoplatonist philosophy, offered a stubborn resistance. For one moment the pendulum even swung back in its favour, on the accession of the philosopher Julian to the throne in 361. But he reigned only two years, and his successor immediately restored the exclusive privilege of Christianity, which was never again directly challenged.

It is true to say that, during this transitional epoch, the effort of Christianity was directed less against the religious side of the old order than the intellectual. On the religious side the edict of an emperor and a little vigorous police action might readily enough secure compliance with the new formulas and the abandonment of the old; but in the intellectual field it was not so. To uproot the study of Plato and Homer, of Aristotle and Zeno, of Philo and Plotinus, was a formidable task; to drive Æschylus and Euripides, Sophocles and Menander from the stage, was as difficult. And yet unless this could be accomplished the soul of paganism would remain. Therefore the new faith put forth its mightiest effort to accomplish these ends, and its success may conveniently be placed at two dates that come just before and just after the year 400. The earlier marks the enforced suppression of the ancient drama as irreligious, and the substitution for it of Christian plays, like the *Moses in Egypt*



or *Sacrifice of Abraham* of Gregory Nazianzen, that were long to monopolize the stage. The latter marks the brutal murder of the mathematician and metaphysician Hypatia at the hands of a Christian mob; she was the last of the pagan philosophers of Alexandria. Thus did Christianity turn and rend her Greek mother.

The relations of Christianity to Greece may be briefly summarized. The intellectualism and language of Greece, in their rise, splendour, and decline, must be thought of as covering about a thousand years, from Homer to the Nicene fathers. In the decadence of its philosophy it had given to the world through Zeno one of the great factors in the revolt of conscience, stoicism. Through its political, economic, and artistic triumph over the Orient with Alexander, it had become the medium for transfusing Eastern ideas into the Mediterranean world. And the hellenizing of Jewish thought, largely in Egypt, was the central incident in that process. It was in part owing to a revitalizing by the Jews that Greek thought had struggled on for a few more centuries in Alexandria, and had thrown off Gnosticism and Neoplatonism as its expiring efforts.

Of all this great heritage of a thousand years it may almost be said that Christianity took what was worst and rejected what was best. The superstition and the myths of paganism were transferred to the rites and the legends of the saints; but the philosophy of the great age of Greece, and its literature of high imagination were trampled under foot, while the new formulary



of beliefs was shaped in the mould of the decadent speculations of Alexandria. Worse than that, the success of Christianity coinciding with the moment when Constantine broke the Empire in two, Christianity in the west quickly became a Latin church. Greece was cast off, very much as Judæa had been after the fall of Jerusalem, to reappear, however, in a novel and highly dynamic form just one thousand years later.

So far we have looked on the dark side of the picture; but there is another, and we must now see how in the realm of conscience a real revolution had been accomplished. If the Church had been weak in the flesh, in the spirit it was not found altogether wanting.

The work of Christianity in establishing an ethical standard may fairly be viewed in two phases. One of these was the push of individuals towards an ethical life which was one of the great creative factors of Christianity; the other was the effort of the Church itself to reduce this force to a system. The first of these two phases can only be indicated, for it is of a nature that defies historical description, — let those who would understand what the struggle for morality was turn to the pages of St. Paul, or to those of the salacious historian of the *Decline and Fall*, or better still to the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. Here all that need be said is this. The pagan world as a whole was flagrantly epicurean. Slavery spelt demoralization. "Drink, eat, revel, and then join us!" says a Roman funeral inscription. Laws, religion, custom, gave little or no encouragement to virtue;



and the result was that the populations of Rome and the cities of the Empire were in large part vicious, and openly vicious. But now Christianity was supreme, and demanded right conduct. The result was a terrible struggle of which the echoes still reverberate in the works of the fathers of the Church; and it cannot be said that the new morality had an easy or complete triumph. Yet even if it proved impossible to change the customs of centuries completely, and even if the partial success was accomplished at a cost that was to prove injurious later, yet a real change was effected. All the elements that made for right living were caught up in the new creed, were stimulated, were developed, and society was endowed with a nucleus of virtuous men living under a code universally accepted if not universally observed.

And it was not very long, less than a century, before this new and great thing was officially and dramatically proclaimed by the Church as the fundamental fact of the new era, as the rock on which the Church, and therefore all human society, reposed. In the year 390 Theodosius was Emperor, a pagan originally, a Spaniard, vigorous but ruthless in administration. In a cause far from justified he asserted the imperial authority in Thessalonica by ordering several thousands of its inhabitants to be butchered. Some weeks later he was in residence at Milan, then almost the rival of Rome for size and opulence, and proceeded to the church to partake of communion. In the doorway he was met by the bishop, Ambrose,



who courageously stood with uplifted hand, supported by his clergy and acolytes, to bar the Emperor's path. The citizens of Milan, who had crowded to see the imperial procession pass, then witnessed one of the greatest scenes of history, though probably few realized it. The successor of Cæsar and Augustus, of Aurelian and Diocletian, did not venture within the sacred precinct, but stood at the door and accepted the supremacy of the moral law. He had sinned against God and man, and he could not enter into communion with the Church unless he fulfilled the penance that Ambrose would lay on him; *Imperator enim intra Ecclesiam non supra Ecclesiam est.*<sup>1</sup>

And so the Emperors, far from being the crude deity imagined by Caligula, or the mystical Oriental emanation of the sun figured by Domitian, or even the administrative presiding officer of religion that Constantine had been, were men once more, liable to sin, liable to judgment, arraignable before a supreme tribunal, of which the bishops of the Church were the representatives. Here was a fact before which all that took place in that extraordinary epoch of moral and of political cataclysms seems to fade into insignificance; and yet those cataclysms were of great violence, and involved nothing less than the destruction of the old Empire and the laying of the foundations of the new Europe.

It has already been mentioned that as years went by the Empire had found it increasingly difficult to

<sup>1</sup> For the Emperor is within, and not above, the Church.



keep intact its long line of frontiers. Beyond the Rhine and the Danube great fermentations of Teutonic and Slavic tribes proceeded. Those nearest the Empire had gradually been used to build up the legions. But the legions made the Emperors, and as the fourth century drew to a close only a step was needed to seat the chief of a Teutonic tribe on the imperial throne. In the territorial sense, too, the process had been more gradual than certain dates over-emphasized by history would at first lead one to suppose. For a long period past tribes like that of the Franks had been allowed to settle within the boundaries of the Empire, and essentially what one has to keep in mind is a twofold displacement. Territorially the Germans are gradually pushing towards the southwest both within and without the imperial frontier; socially, the Romans have relinquished the war-like virtues to the Germans.

From the year 375, the situation grew rapidly acute. The Germans, overpopulous and pressed by other nations from the east, broke down the tottering defence of Rome; they overran the Balkan peninsula, France, Spain, Africa, even Italy; and, a new feature in the situation, they carried their families with them with a view to permanent settlement. In 410 Alaric, king of the Visigoths, who had held some of the highest offices in the Empire, occupied northern and central Italy at the head of a Gothic army; for the third time in three years he carried his arms to the gates of Rome, and finally captured the city by storm.



It was not the first time Rome had fallen. In the course of the civil wars, it had often enough happened to the city to change masters through violence, as when Constantine had ousted Maxentius. Incidents of this sort had occurred several times during the fourth century, and in the course of them the city had been plundered. Stilicho had stripped the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus of its golden doors, while other temples, the relics of paganism, suffered in like fashion.

The capture of the city by Alaric, the ex-Roman official and Gothic chief, was similar, but with some added features. The sacking was more severe; Rome was left ruinous and depopulated; the slaves, for whom the Goths had little use and no market, mostly regained freedom; but the Church was respected. For within half a century previous to this event the semi-civilized Goths had acquired, through Wulfila, both Christianity and a written language. They united the fervour of the new convert with the naïve superstition of a primitive civilization. And they, like Theodosius twenty years earlier, bowed the head and grounded the sword before the symbol of the priest. That fact alone, in the wreck of a mighty empire, appeared to stand solid amid the surges of destruction. And the situation of Europe from this moment was founded on the relation thus established between the Teuton warrior and the Latin priest.

In a century or so, from the crossing of the Danube by the Goths, the Empire underwent complete transformation. The break between Greek and Roman, East and West, Constantinople and Rome, became



complete. The East survived politically, largely because of the favourable situation of Constantinople; the West succumbed. Romulus Augustulus, the last Emperor, was deposed in 476; Theodoric the Great founded the Ostrogothic kingdom in 493; and with these events it may be said that a new age began, and that our concern will no longer be with the Mediterranean world, but with Europe. During this epoch, that is the fourth and fifth centuries, let us trace such aspects of the history of the Church as have not yet received notice.

The political triumph of Christianity coincided with the moment of greatest doctrinal conflict. Earlier, there had been merely unorganized religious opinion with a central line from which many Christians diverged widely. After, there was a tendency to come to an organized cult, from which it would be as criminal to dissent as in former centuries from the cult of the Emperor. With the immediate successors of Constantine the conflicts, especially of Arians and Athanasians, were violent, and a succession of synods and councils were "convened by the Emperor's order in the hope of bringing every man around to his own opinion."<sup>1</sup> Arianism was stamped out in the Latin Empire by the close of the fourth century. But Wulfila carried it to the Goths, and it prevailed generally among the Teutonic tribes, until the Visigoths abandoned it in 589 at the Synod of Toledo, and last of all among the Lombards, who did not accept the Nicene Creed until 662.

<sup>1</sup> Am. Marcellinus, *xxi*, 16, quot. by Hodgkin.



Arianism was not the only heresy, as we may now term any divergence from the central belief of the Church. The Donatists, the Monophysites, the Pelagians, the Nestorians, the Paulicians, may serve to represent many controversies connected with the doctrines of free will, predestination, the divine nature of Christ, the interrelations of the Trinity, the resurrection, and other matters, some of which will later be considered more fully. But it may be said that by the end of the fifth century these controversies had become less acute and less widespread, and that there was a marked tendency to reach doctrinal equilibrium. This tendency was further accentuated in the centuries that followed; so that we may fairly mark out a descending curve of theological dispute from the accession of Constantine in 312 to the period of Gregory, of the conquest of Spain by the Mohammedans, and of the beginnings of the Carolingian dynasty, which is as far as we need look for the present.

Let us turn from dogmatic controversy to a very different thing, the inner religious life. It has already been said that in this matter the revolution of Constantine had far-reaching effects. For the spiritual leaders of the Christians soon found that the Church, on its inflated and popular basis, was not altogether suited to the sort of ministration they had formerly practised. It was almost a new institution. A bishop of Milan or Rome, with the entire populations of those cities for his flock, had of necessity to be an administrative person, and a very active one, in such a transition as was taking place; while his flock had not



only increased in numbers but decreased in quality. And while, as in the case of Ambrose, the new conditions were at times compatible with high Christian ideals, more often the reverse was the case.

This change in the Church was hard, therefore, on Christians for whom the spiritual life still meant everything, who cared more for humility and salvation than for splendour and popular success. What were they to do? How could spiritual Christianity continue its life? The reply was, monasticism. Here was the natural continuation of that secluded life of piety and self-abnegation which the early conditions of the Church had imposed and the new conditions seemed to make impossible. The Church had suddenly become identical with human society, and "the more deeply she became involved in the world, in politics, and in culture, the more loudly and impressively . . . she preached what monasticism now practised. . . . The Church of Constantine drove into solitude and the desert those who wished to devote themselves to religion." <sup>1</sup>

Monasticism, like all else in this world, was a growth, but a growth vastly stimulated by the event of 312, and by that of 410. It can be traced back from Italy to Egypt, and from Christianity to paganism. But for the present purpose it may be considered to have struck deep root as a mode of thought and of life before the end of the fourth century. Then came the great Teutonic migrations; and, before the German fire and sword, the old civilization that had learned

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, *Monasticism*, pp. 45, 43.



so many secrets of life while forgetting the most important of all, — how to defend it, — scattered in all directions for refuge. Among marshes and lagoons, at Ravenna and the new-formed Venice, a shelter might be found; but safer even was the Church, and especially the cloister. There, under the protection of the Latin cross, a symbol the barbarians dare not violate, what was left of Roman intellectualism could cower while the storm blew over, presently to reissue as the army of Christ, to conquer, with new-forged weapons, lands that the legions of their fathers had never even beheld. The great movement towards monasticism, then, coincides with the Teutonic invasions; we must await the pontificate of Gregory the Great, two centuries later, to see the institution fully developed.

Meanwhile, what of the Popes? Certain facts concerning them may be chronicled here in order of date, through which the inevitable developments can easily be traced. Damasus attained the Papacy in 368, after a faction fight of great violence with Ursinicus. The churches of Rome were fortified by the opposing parties, defended and stormed, at great cost in human lives. The form of election was now well established; it was bound to produce events like those just described, as it depended on the candidate's acclamation by the Senate, the clergy, and the people; — the modern form of presenting the newly elected Pope from the balcony of St. Peter's doubtless represents this tradition. Among other events that belong to this period was the translation of the Scriptures into



Latin by Jerome, the so-called Vulgate, one of many incidents marking the latinization of Christianity and the split between East and West. The Latin Scriptures thus came six centuries after the Septuagint.

Another of the minor events to be noted under Pope Damasus was the transfer from the Emperor to the Pope of the adulatory, almost servile, practice of so many generations whereby the individual created the Emperor his universal legatee. Although this practice was not to prove of much effect in the period of disruption that followed so soon, yet it was the starting-point from which the organization of the Papacy as a financial machine and the operation of mortmain took their origin.

Under Siricius (384-398) we come to the first Decretal, a papal decree laying down the law as to certain doubtful points submitted to the bishop of Rome's judgment. While the force of this was far from universal, yet there was a strong tendency already to accept the papal decisions in matters of doctrine and discipline. The chief subject on which Siricius expressed himself was that of the celibacy of the clergy, and this interesting matter deserves a few words of notice.

The Christian tradition of celibacy may be traced back in one direction to the priests of Isis or to the customs of Asia; in another to a strong prejudice of Paul, and to his teaching; and in yet another to an early revolt of the Christians against the extreme sexual immorality of their day. The whole question is of the most involved character. The frame of mind



that leads to celibacy is generally a state of reaction, and is therefore more likely to occur in sensual than in temperate natures; when found in waves as a mode for many, it suggests morbid conditions, closely allied to what might be called religious inversion. That is a feature of celibacy which the history of religion throws into constant relief. The trend towards legislation imposing celibacy on the regular clergy was continuous from the time of Paul. The Council of Nicæa marks the break between the Greek and the Latin practice in this matter, the former rejecting the rule. In the West the legislation of Siricius was an important step towards celibacy of the clergy, though it took over five hundred years more to make the law of the Church really imperative in this respect.

After the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410 the city became absolutely Christian, and its bishop was the supreme ruler. Innocent I perceived that in the chaos of western Europe the papal supremacy might conceivably be extended in its religious functions to the old bounds of the Empire, and he issued important circular letters in which he advanced the claim that all the bishops of the West owed obedience to the bishop of Rome. In 417 Innocent was chosen to arbitrate the great doctrinal controversy between Pelagius and Augustine, and on this occasion assumed such a tone of authority as had not yet been heard from the papal chair. His decision was in favour of Augustine, as it well might be; for that father's eloquent work the *City of God*, one of the few books that mark an



epoch, had formulated for the first time the idea of a great theocracy centring about Rome that should replace the old Empire by a world-conquering religious organization.

In 417 we have one of the last acts of the dying Empire in regard to the new religion. The Emperor Honorius, from his strong refuge at Ravenna, issued a decree making it punishable by death to assert the heresies of which Innocent had found Pelagius guilty; a position Rome still stood for more than a thousand years later. For the twenty-five years following there is little to chronicle except internal broils, but the middle of the century witnessed the memorable pontificate of Leo I, the Great (440-461).

Under Leo the Papacy went through great vicissitudes. The power of the See of Rome was extended. The bishops of Gaul appealed to its decisions. Leo declined to accept certain decrees of a council of the Church held at Ephesus, and the court of Constantinople supported him and had these decrees reversed by the Council of Chalcedon. He further acted as the representative of that council, that is, of the Church, in deposing the bishop Dioscorus; but the claim made later that the thirty-first canon of the council acknowledged the primacy of the See of Rome has now been demonstrated to be a forgery.

On the other hand, the full fury of the German devastations was felt during Leo's pontificate. The Huns, pressing from the east, had been largely instrumental in driving the German tribes into the Roman world; they now made their great incursions, being



expelled from Gaul after Attila's defeat at Chalons in 451, but invading northern Italy in the following year. Leo proceeded to Attila's camp, averted his wrath in a manner, that the chronicles do not fail to describe as miraculous, and persuaded him to retire to the valley of the Danube. With the Vandals, however, seven years later, Leo's powers proved less efficacious. Their army, bent on plunder, crossed over from Africa to Italy, and inflicted on Rome a siege and a sack even more terrible than that of Alaric fifty years before.

Immediately after the extinction of the Western Empire with Romulus Augustulus in 476, a long-growing rivalry between the sees of Rome and of Constantinople came to a head. With political anarchy in the West, the position of the Pope was somewhat ambiguous. The Patriarch of Constantinople claimed that as the Empire now had but one capital and one emperor, he was entitled to take precedence; he assumed for his Church the designation of "Mother of all Christians and of the Orthodox Religion." The Popes protested. The rival bishops excommunicated one another; and a schism, forerunner of the permanent one that occurred later, was engendered that lasted about forty years. This event may serve to mark the close of the fifth century; the events of the sixth belong to another chapter.



## CHAPTER X

### JUSTINIAN AND GREGORY THE GREAT

Two names dominate the sixth century, those of the Emperor Justinian and of Pope Gregory the Great; both stand for the same thing: social and political organization. And that is the aspect of the history of those times that will be chiefly dealt with here, which, incidentally, will bring us to some important questions of law and of political theory. Before going into these matters, however, the general lines of political movement up to the year 604 had better be indicated.

In France, Spain, and Italy, great Teutonic kingdoms had come into existence, — of the Franks, of the Visigoths, of the Ostrogoths. None of these gave much promise of stability, though the Franks after two stormy centuries were to achieve it. In the year 500 Clovis was king of the Franks, Theodoric king of the Ostrogoths; and the latter came near asserting a general supremacy over all the German kingdoms. But the Teutons had not as yet sunk their roots deeply. Among the provinces that fringed the Mediterranean they were little more than a small military caste lording it over a comparatively large Latin population; and their new kingdoms were only just beginning to evolve institutions adapted to the new circumstances. All depended as yet on the efforts



of a few commanding personalities, and whenever these passed off the stage, the tendency was to revert to anarchy and destruction.

It was precisely this that happened on the death of Theodoric. The Ostrogothic kingdom rapidly developed symptoms of weakness, and this coincided with a fleeting recurrence of vigour on the part of the old Empire. The Emperor Justinian ascended the throne of Constantinople in 527, and soon entered on the work of reconquering the Empire from the Germans. This work proved too vast for complete accomplishment. Yet in 534 his general Belisarius had crushed the Vandals and recovered Africa. He then turned against Italy, and in 540 defeated and captured the Ostrogothic king, Vitiges, whom he sent to Constantinople a prisoner. Further struggles followed in which Justinian never quite succeeded in conquering all Italy, in which the Ostrogoths perished, and in which a new tribe, the Lombards, took firm hold of northern Italy, and secured much of the centre. At the close of the century, Rome, Ravenna, Naples and the south owed obedience to the Emperor of Constantinople; while beyond the Alps the Frankish power was consolidating with Clotaire in 613, and the foundations were being laid for a great Frankish empire.

That being the general movement of the century, let us now turn to those internal questions of law, of social, political, and ecclesiastical organization, which so far have been neglected. Law is one of those obscure foundations of the social edifice that are decisive



of its solidity; and in this respect it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the greatest work of Rome was her law. Her Empire passed away fifteen hundred years ago; her language survived much longer, but has now been dead for some centuries; yet her law remains in modified form the present-day basis of more than one national code.

In the history of the Roman law let us first note a certain fact that coincides with the time of Christ. That was an age of great political transformation and therefore an age of legal theorizing. And in the theories of the Roman lawyers, we find the legal counterpart of the ideas of Seneca and of Paul, of Stoicism and of Christianity. The conquest of so many nations had imposed on Rome the formulation of a new law alongside of that which regulated the intercourse of her own citizens, a sort of international law for the Mediterranean world. This was the *jus gentium*, as opposed to the *jus civile*; and behind the *jus gentium*, in the speculations of the Roman lawyers, there soon appeared an even larger idea.

In the Roman mind religion was little more than the ceremonial dress of law. Legal speculation on the *jus gentium*, on the law applicable to all the nations, was closely akin to the philosophic speculation of the Stoics on the relations of all human beings, or the religious speculation of the Christians who followed Paul in believing that all men were in nature equal. The Roman jurists arrived at the conception of a *jus naturale*, a theoretical natural law and universal justice. These developments of thought are traceable from



the period of Cicero to that of Justinian. Alongside, interacting, were the political and social changes of the epoch. A conception of the divine Emperor as a being above and beyond the law was borrowed from the Greeks; the laws of slavery were humanized; the larger law of nations tended to swallow the lesser law of Rome; and, fiscal necessities aiding, Roman citizenship was rapidly extended until it finally embraced all the free inhabitants of the Empire.

It was in the matter of slavery that the Roman law failed most conspicuously to reach a universal and equal view. It is true that the most advanced thinkers found slavery difficult to accept; that some theorists went so far as to declare that slavery was against the law of nature; that the power of the master over his slave was reduced. But it needs many centuries to destroy deep-rooted customs, and it cannot be held against the Church that it took up an attitude no more pronounced on this subject than did the foremost pagan jurists and philosophers; on the contrary, it may be praised for having been in line with a movement which gradually brought about a marked change. In following up this change, from ancient slavery to mediæval serfdom, political and also economic factors will have to be considered; the actual point of transition was the abolition of the traffic in slaves, of which more will be said later.

In terms of Christianity the idea that, according to the law of nature, the master and the slave were equal, was interpreted in the sense that they were equal before God. Slaves were therefore as capable



of a religious life as their masters; and if they owed their masters service they were entitled to receive justice. The act of manumission, liberating the slave, was placed under the auspices of the Church soon after the conversion of Constantine; and later became a pious work, protected, and encouraged. Individual members of the lower clergy, which was largely drawn, as it continues to be, from inferior social strata, were occasionally manumitted for the purpose of ordination,<sup>1</sup> or often enough remained serfs.

There is another fundamental group of ideas in addition to slavery that must be examined before we come to the legal reforms of the Emperor Justinian; this is what relates to the sovereign or state and the source of political authority. Without going so far as to consider the idea of the social contract, as derived from the Greek philosophy, it will be sufficient to say that the Roman jurists connected the institutions of republican Rome with the military despotism of the Emperors by means of the fiction, expressed by Ulpian, that the Emperor had an absolute right to legislate because the people had conferred on him the necessary power. And this fiction or theory stood behind Roman law until it came into contact with the law of the German tribes, where the idea that law proceeded from the whole community existed in a vital, active form.

The attitude towards political authority of Jesus, of Paul, of the early Christian leaders, has already

<sup>1</sup> At one time the Church doctrine was that ordination implied manumission.



been indicated. Writers on political theory have been accustomed to build up a Pauline doctrine of civil government as a divine institution; but even if such a doctrine can be extracted from Paul's writings, even if his successors accepted or elaborated it, it is evident that it was merely a doctrine of convenience, of evasion. In reality there was a fundamental incompatibility between Christianity and the government it had to accept, until Constantine merged the one into the other. It was during this epoch and under these circumstances that the theory was developed that government was instituted by God because of the weakness and sins of human nature.

The second and third centuries saw Christians willing to accept the doctrine that the pagan Emperor was the first of men, second only to God. So that with Constantine the transition to a conception of the Emperor as a representative of the deity, endowed in some special way, after the Oriental manner, with the grace of God, was easy. At the close of the fourth century Irenæus declares that "the Empire is not in the Church, but the Church in the Empire, and that there is no one over the Emperor but God who made him."<sup>1</sup> And had the Emperors continued in their office of Pontifex Maximus, and in their Roman capital, they and not the Popes would have continued to reap the benefit of this doctrine. As it was, they abandoned the position, and allowed the Church, by such treatment as that meted out by Ambrose to Theodosius, to relegate them to a position of inferiority.

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Mediæval Political Theory*, vol. 1, p. 148.



In the fifth century the pseudo-Augustine declares that the sovereign is the "Vicar of God," and there seems to be a lurking inference that his acts may not be questioned, or that he is infallible. This doctrine, applied in due course to the Popes, was not to become a canon of the Church until the nineteenth century, when the Council of the Vatican affirmed it. Gregory the Great, at the close of the sixth century, basing himself largely on Augustine and his own contemporary Isidore of Seville, laid down that a good ruler is a reward from God for a good people, but that an evil one is a punishment equally divine. The evil ruler is appointed by God and must not under any circumstances be resisted. Evil is of the essence of man's condition on earth.

The transitions of this doctrine are readily to be fitted in with the changing conditions of Christianity. When Constantine placed himself at the head of the Church, it was natural that a strong tendency should have arisen to exalt the sovereign's position. With the west and Rome cast off from the Empire, and her bishops rapidly gaining consciousness of their opportunity for power, it was inevitable that they should have continued strengthening a doctrine which they were rapidly converting to their own advantage.<sup>1</sup>

The legal reforms of Justinian were carried out in the first half of the sixth century, and were in the main a crystallization of the cumbersome accumula-

<sup>1</sup> The case of Gregory presents grave difficulties that this passage does not touch; it is only to be taken in the widest sense, as trying to show tendencies, nothing more.



tions of the Roman law into a system. This was set out in the Code, Digest, Institutes, and Novellæ, of which the Code opens with the Nicene Creed, and the Institutes with the following words: "*In Nomine Domini Nostri Jesu Christi: Imperator Cæsar Flavius Justinianus, Alemanicus, Gotthicus, Francicus, Germanicus, Anticus, Alanicus, Vandalicus, Africanus, pius, felix, inclytus, victor ac triumphator, semper Augustus, cupidæ legum juventuti. . . .*" This recognition of religion by the law amounted in one sense to a restatement of the relation that existed in the early days of Rome when religion was identified with the citizen's duty to the state. Under Justinian the same exclusivism ruled, and the Code condemned heresy as a capital offence, thus embodying one of the fundamental positions that Christianity had derived from Judaism. It further recognised the authority of the councils of the Church concerning matters of dogma, and the primacy of the bishop of Rome. Church lands, as in former times those of the temples, were held to be sacred, tax free, and inalienable, while the right of the Church to acquire property was not limited; — a position which implied the indefinite extension of the Church as a privileged landowner.

The Code further embodied provisions that regulated the hierarchy of the Church, and in some degree its internal discipline, by fixing the gradations of metropolitan, bishops, abbots; by prescribing the form of ordinations and the constitution of monasteries; by pronouncing the rules and penalties of clerical discipline and morality.



In essence the Code of Justinian was, as everything in its antecedents tended to make it, a system of law adapted to the good administration of a highly organized despotism. Behind it, and behind all codes derived from it, lurked the essential idea that to one supreme head was delegated, whether by the people or by God, the right to legislate; while all through it ran the sanctity of hierarchical adjustments and of paternal authority. "I suppose," wrote Stubbs to J. R. Green, "that no nation using the Civil Law has ever made its way to freedom, whilst wherever it has been introduced the extinction of popular liberty has followed sooner or later."

Christianity had thus merged what might, but for the conversion of Constantine, have been its own code of laws into the Roman law. For the Canon law, that is, the collection of the canons of the councils, together with, in the West, the decretals of the Popes, derived its force explicitly or implicitly from the sanction of the imperial law. And among the new ideas that had found their way into the ordinary routine of the civil tribunals from the Christian practice, some struck at the very roots of the social order, like those concerning matrimony. But the conquest of Justinian, the fact that his troops held Rome, planted the Code firmly in western Europe.

In addition to what has just been said, it is necessary to point out another line along which the Church was acquiring strength. In the difficult conditions arising from the injection of the German conquerors into the midst of the unmilitary population of the



Empire, the clergy naturally played the part of mediator. Latin intellect balanced Teutonic courage, and the conquered race soon learnt the trick of dominating its conqueror through superstition. Then arose that tradition of jugglery, mystification, and forgery, which was to be the most unworthy characteristic of the mediæval Church. By miraculous deceptions played on superstitious fear, by superior address in the arts of administration and law, the ecclesiastics of western Europe became in great part its rulers. They even succeeded in controlling the kingship, in a certain measure, by means of the ceremonial of consecration and coronation. They became civil judges by virtue of their ecclesiastical office. They became the active part of the king's council; and in the Visigothic kingdom of Spain the function of legislation was actually exercised by the synod of bishops. Even more effective was the mechanism whereby the Church gradually established its hold over the conscience of the individual by means not generally within the purview of law. The starting-point here was laudable enough, — the ethical standard, the demand that the individual should live rightly. But the unconscious object soon became far from laudable, for it was nothing more than to obtain power by morally subjecting the individual to an organization that aspired at controlling not for the sake of morality, but for the sake of power, and not merely its Teutonic conquerors, but all mankind. Confession, penance, excommunication, these were the great means of action developed by the Church.



Confession of sins made by one member of the Christian community to another, was a practice of the earliest times. By the third century it had become a regular method whereby the Church attempted to keep its fold free from the great offences it specially reprobated: idolatry, murder, adultery. In the fifth century, during the pontificate of Leo I, the mortal sins were made to coincide with those crimes which the Roman law punished by death, exile, or severe corporal penalties, and confession was placed exclusively in the hands of the priest. From this moment, largely through the influence of the monasteries, the tendency began to extend the working of confession downwards from grave criminal offences to petty deviations of conduct, until when the thirteenth century is reached the rule was laid down that confession at least once a year was an obligation for every member of the Church.

Confession involved other things. Absolution, a term taken from the Roman law, admitted to communion. Penance was imposed as a condition of absolution. The hardened sinner who would not confess, not repent, not do penance, might be excluded from communion, or excommunicated. When dealing with a later period we shall see what a tremendous weapon this became in the hands of the Church, even though at times it proved to have a double edge.

It remains to be said, before passing to the pontificate of Gregory the Great, that the German kingdoms infused new elements into the law. Their legislation was influenced by the Church and by the Roman



law according to their proximity to Italy; the Salic law of northeastern France showing least Roman admixture, that of the Ostrogoths in Italy most.

The pontificate of Gregory I, called the Great, lasted from 590 to 604. He was a Roman of distinguished birth, grandson of Pope Felix IV, and early marked out for high office. He became Prætor of the city, but quickly renounced this dignity, gave his large fortune to charitable and religious institutions, and retired to a monastery which he had himself founded. He was not allowed, however, to bury his talents in the cloister. Important Church missions were entrusted to him; and finally he was part compelled, part persuaded, to ascend the Papal throne in the year 590.

Gregory immediately set to work, and in all directions, as an enthusiastic, active administrator and organizer, as a superstitious, zealous churchman of a markedly mediæval type. In its larger aspects his policy affirmed the papal power over western Europe, by rooting up Arianism from among the Lombards and the Visigoths, by securing the widespread submission of the western bishops to Rome, by rejecting the claims of the Patriarch of Constantinople to primacy, by converting the monastic institution into a great missionary machine under the supreme control of Rome. This last feature of his work deserves special notice.

Monasticism came to its organization in the sixth century. St. Benedict (490-543) founded the monas-



tery of Monte Cassino, and formulated a rule, the model or starting-point for all the orders of monks instituted since that day. The Benedictine rule enjoined humility and obedience, that the monk should give up his own will to that of his abbot, that he should consider himself worthless and vile, always and at all times fixing his looks upon the ground. In other words, for the sake of attaining the virtue of lowliness, all else — individualism, intelligence, emotion — was to be killed. Man was no longer to raise his head and gaze at all that surrounded him, at nature, at his fellow man or the woman who might become his mate, he was no longer to think, to choose his way, to solve his difficulties, to struggle against fate, but he was to hang his head in humility and blindly obey another man fitted for command only by having himself passed before through that soul-crushing process. The more minute provisions of the rule all had the grand object in view of the abasement of man before God. The constant obligation to repeat set formulas and ceremonial acts at all hours of the day and night intensified the process of intellectual and moral mortification.

Gregory gave the monastic movement a great impetus, and converted it to practical purposes. He supported the Benedictines and extended the sway of their order. They were now sent forth as a militia of Rome, to fight her battles on the borders of paganism, and to bring the extreme parts of Europe under her sway. A new St. Augustine <sup>1</sup> led forty monks into

<sup>1</sup> The earlier is known as Augustine of Hippo, the later as Augustine of Canterbury.



Britain to convert the Saxon kingdoms in that island, and to found the church of Canterbury. It was doubtless with them in mind that Newman so eloquently wrote: "A brotherhood of holy pastors, with mitre and crosier and uplifted hand, walked forth and blessed and ruled a joyful people. The crucifix headed the procession, and simple monks were there with hearts in prayer, and sweet chants resounded, and the holy Latin tongue was heard, and boys came forth in white, swinging censers, and the fragrant cloud arose, and mass was sung, and the Saints were invoked. . . ."

These words strike the note when we enter the seventh century. The work of Gregory had been to consolidate the Church as a militant organization. No detail had escaped him. While with one hand he negotiated with queen Brunehaut of the Franks to establish Roman control over the synods of Gaul, with the other he worked at questions of vestments, of music, of ceremonial. He gave the Roman liturgy its form, and imposed it on western Europe; and at his death he left the Papacy unquestionably established as the one supreme and stable institution of Latin Europe.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE MILLENNIUM

FOR more than a century and a half after the death of Gregory, the history of the Church has nothing notable to show. The Papacy made little further advance; it fell into not very vigorous hands, and suffered, as did all Europe, from the generally bad conditions of the epoch. Yet the great event of the times was religious. For only a few years after Gregory's death, in 622, took place the Hegira, Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina;—a new faith had come into existence, rapidly to burst on the Mediterranean world.

Mohammedanism need not be considered as a creed and as an influence, for Christianity had now lost its early fluidity, was now well past the formative period; although it was to come into violent shock with the new religion of the kaleidoscopic East, it was not to draw from it any vital elements. All that need be pointed out is that Mohammedanism was closely akin to primitive Judaic Christianity, but that, compared with later Christianity, it kept itself untouched by extraneous influences; its creed was free from subtlety, more easy to grasp, though less adapted to mystify, than that of Nicæa, for it simply declared that God was God and that Mohammed was his prophet. Lastly, it may be noted that Mohammed and his



successors created, what Paul, and Constantine, and the Popes, could never quite bring about, a complete union of the temporal and spiritual powers, an absolute theocracy.

Mohammedanism advanced with hurricane rapidity. By the middle of the seventh century it had swept over Syria to the north, over Africa to the west. In the year 700, the Ommiads carried the crescent almost to the walls of Constantinople, while to the west Musa's horse pawed the surf of the Atlantic; eleven years later the Visigoths of Spain were routed; in 730, Avignon was captured, the Rhone was crossed, and the Alps rose in sight of the Arab banners. The moment had come when the two great streams of Arabian conquest appeared as though they might join together again along the northern shores of the Mediterranean, submerge Constantinople and Rome, and in one last effort destroy the tottering civilization to which Christianity had given a new but precarious lease of life. It was at the very turn of this great crisis that, for the first time, the Franks played a decisive part in the affairs of Europe.

We have already caught a glimpse or two of the Franks. They had been among the first of the German tribes to effect a settlement within the bounds of the Empire, occupying the district about the mouth of the Rhine. Yet they had long retained their primitive characteristics, and had not been converted to Christianity until the year 496. The first dynasty of their kings, the Merovingians, fell into degeneracy



just as the Mohammedan era was beginning, and a century later a new family, that of the Carolingians, was rapidly rising to power. It was Charles Martel, Mayor of the Palace of the Merovingian puppet king, who rolled back the tide of Mohammedan success, by defeating the Emir Abdurrrhaman at Tours in 732. Presently the Arabs fell back beyond the Pyrenees, and the danger of Europe had passed.

From this moment the power of Charles Martel and his successors grew apace. Their relations with the Papacy became very important. The hold that the monk missionaries were getting on the frontiers was now one of the chief preoccupations of the Popes. At the very moment when the Franks were driving the Arabs back into Spain, St. Boniface was converting the German countries that lie between the Rhine and the Elbe. He was created a bishop, and then archbishop of Mainz, taking an oath to "his apostolic Lord," the Pope, "to serve thee and thy Church in all things."

As Christianity penetrated Germany, Frankish political influence followed. Charles Martel's policy was to support the bishops; and in the year 739 Rome herself turned to him for help. The power of Constantinople had rapidly waned after Justinian. The Lombards dominated Italy, a constant threat to the Popes, who barely succeeded in maintaining a shadowy independence. At last Gregory III applied to the Franks for direct help and intervention in the affairs of Italy.

Charles Martel was not destined to play this larger



part; that was reserved for one of his descendants. He died in 741. There followed a short period of internal dissension. In 751, however, Pepin the Short, on the advice of Pope Zachary, summoned an assembly of the Frankish nobles and proclaimed himself king; and in the following year the Papacy and the Franks came definitely together. Astolf, king of the Lombards, pressed Rome and also Ravenna, the last hold of Constantinople on Italian soil. Pope Stephen II, instead of turning to the feeble Emperor of the East, summoned Pepin to protect "the cause of St. Peter and the Roman Republic." He left his threatened capital, journeyed to France, and consecrated Pepin in the church of St. Denis. The new-crowned Carlovingian king repaid his Papal sponsor by declaring war against the Lombards; they were foiled in a determined effort to capture Rome; they were several times defeated by the Franks; and by the year 756 their power had been limited to northern Italy, while the Pope held triumphant possession of the centre from the mouth of the Po to Rome. This was the real foundation of that central Italian state which was, with slight changes, to endure eleven hundred years.

The son of Pepin was Charlemagne, who maintained the close relations of his father with the Pope. In 770 he married the daughter of Didier, king of the Lombards, and in the following year repudiated her. Didier thereupon turned against Rome, and Pope Hadrian I called for the Frankish help. The Lombards fared even worse at the hands of the son than



they had at the hands of the father. In 773 Charlemagne crossed the Alps and, after a struggle of some months, crushed the Lombard kingdom out of existence. In April, 774, the king of the Franks made a triumphant entry into Rome. He proceeded to the church of St. Peter's, built at the time of Constantine, where the Pope stood ready to receive him. The Frank dismounted, and after reverently kissing every step that led up to the church, entered it to celebrate a Christian triumph.

If the greatest Teuton of his time was so completely under the wonderful religious spell woven by the Latins as this incident would suggest, can it be wondered at if in the heart of Germany that spell commanded even greater miracles? Charlemagne was on conquest bent, and realizing that religion was greater than the sword, armed himself doubly. He smote with one hand and tendered baptism with the other. His conquering armies reached both the mouth and the source of the Elbe, and after their victories imposed conversion, built churches, installed bishops. And by that means Charlemagne succeeded where Tiberius and Drusus had failed, and won western and southern Germany to civilization.

In the year 800 Charlemagne was at the pinnacle of his power. France, northern Italy, the Elbe, and a great part of the Danube were his. In Europe there was little else. The empire of Constantinople was in feeble hands. The Saracens held Spain and the African coast. But the Papacy was once more threatened, and needed support against the turbulent aris-



tocracy of Rome. Leo III was wounded and driven from the city. He sought refuge with the Frankish sovereign, and Charlemagne promptly marched on Rome, once more to restore the Papal power. On the 25th of December of the year 800, the day sacred to the birth of Apollo, and Mithra, and Christ, he proceeded for the second time to St. Peter's to render thanks, and to assume a greater and well-won dignity. But priestcraft intervened to raise the feeble Pope above the mighty sovereign. As Charlemagne knelt at the high altar unawares, the Pope placed a crown on his head and saluted him master of the Roman world. The clergy and people burst into the acclamations unheard for so many centuries: "Augustus! Emperor!" and Rome beheld an Emperor once more.

The empire of Charlemagne may be thought of partly as a belated echo of the old empire on its later military and semi-barbarian footing, partly as a starting-point for a new organization of Europe. It was only a succession of men of ability on the throne that had made the new Teutonic empire possible, and the constitution of the Carlovingian monarchy, with all the administrative skill that Charlemagne put into it, and even with the support of the Church, was not as strong as the earlier Roman one on which it was in part modelled. On the whole, it was an ephemeral coming together of Christian latinism and the new teutonism, of the Church and the Germanic tribal monarchies, under the models of the old empire. And



it soon passed away to make room for a state of affairs widely different.

As the Merovingians before them, so the Carolingians gradually lost their hold. The successors of Charlemagne were not his equals, and his empire and his work soon went to pieces. The devotion of the Carolingians to the Church helped them up to the beginning of the ninth century; after that date the Church began to assert an uncontrollable preponderance. In France and in Germany this may be chiefly associated with the spread and increase of the monastic orders. The conquering army of Christian missionaries had by this time become far less conspicuous than the conquering army of privileged land-grabbers. In the eighth century the abbey of S. Rémi of Reims already possessed seven hundred manors; that of St. Mandeville had over seventeen hundred which, in about a hundred years, it increased to forty-eight hundred; the abbey of Luxeuil in the ninth century had fifteen thousand manors, that of St. Martin of Tours had twenty thousand serfs. The great ecclesiastical principalities that, down to the close of the eighteenth century, streaked the map of Europe from the Zuyder Zee to the Tyrol, along the old border of the empire, were rapidly taking root.

The immense extension of the territorial influence of the Church struck at the foundations of social order. For the administrative machinery of Charlemagne, like that of Rome and of Constantinople, was more bureaucratic than territorial; while the tendency of the Middle Ages was strongly the other way.



No sooner was his strong arm removed than Europe began to suffer severely from the last and worst form of the barbarian invasions. The Northmen came down in their ships from beyond the Elbe and for two centuries harried France and Germany within a zone of about two hundred miles from the coast. Eventually they conquered Normandy, Britain, Sicily, and Naples. During the same epoch the Slavs and Huns were almost equally destructive in the valley of the Danube, and the Saracens in Italy and along the Mediterranean seaboard.

For the present general purpose this epoch of anarchy and devastation may be thought of as stretching from 800 to 1000, with the worst period midway between these dates. And in it sprang up military feudalism. The Comes or Count, an official like the Roman Prætor, whom Charlemagne had placed in charge of the provinces of his empire, continued after his death, but tended, in the disintegration that followed, to remain permanently at his post, to transmit it by inheritance to his son, to acquire local rights and prerogatives, and to organize defence against the barbarian marauders. Military defence against the incessant forays of piratical bands of necessity grew local, while the soldier demanded special privileges in return for his protection. And in an age of increasing chaos and misery, with money scarce, with the poor helpless and downtrodden, with the soldier more and more highly trained and specialized, the characteristic features of feudalism were rapidly evolved. The land gave its foundation to the new system. The Roman



villa with its slaves had been a well-nigh self-supporting economic entity. Its successor, the mediæval manor, was this and even more. The land supplied the necessities not only of life but of war, and the individual was worth just as much as his land. Serfs and cattle, wood and watermill, stout walls and a craggy cliff to bear them, trade routes to tax and harry, villages or cities to oppress or defend, these were the factors of the feudal soldier's power. And through the ninth and tenth centuries, and later, this power of the local military landowner was growing with the same rapidity as the landholding of the abbot and bishop.

What wonder is it, then, that if we turn to the year 1000 and view the situation of the inheritance of Charlemagne at that date, we shall find something widely different from what existed in the year 800. It was just at the close of the tenth century that the Germanic emperors, successors of Charlemagne, monarchs of Swabia, Franconia, Saxony, came to a clearly elective constitution. They alone, in the caste of Teutonic warriors that asserted lay prerogatives in western Europe, were to depend on electoral and not hereditary rights. And the Church had pushed in this direction, "zealous for a method of appointment prescribed by its own law,"<sup>1</sup> and that gave an opening, like the ceremonies of coronation and consecration, for the effective intervention of the priest.

Below the Emperor the hereditary idea prevailed,

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 226.



together with the doctrine of the relation of man to man, or strictly speaking, of land beneficiary to land beneficiary, by successive steps of superior and inferior on a reciprocal basis of duty and service. The Emperor was suzerain of dukes and counts, who in turn had their own vassals bound to serve them with fewer or more men-at-arms according to the extent of their territorial holding. And so through all society this ladder-like system had been established, leaving on its lowest rung the serfs.

The Church was influenced by the growth of feudalism, and derived from it elements that blended readily with similar processes already long maturing within it. Priests, bishops, abbots, archbishops, might now be viewed like the feudal military hierarchy; while the Pope might be imagined at the head of the Church in the same supreme sense of suzerainty as the Emperor at the head of the Empire. This idea was fully fledged before the end of the tenth century; a hundred years later it was to lead to an inevitable conflict between Pope and Emperor as to who should top the new European edifice, the lay or the ecclesiastical suzerain.

While these changes were proceeding, the Popes had been profiting greatly both from the rise and from the fall of the Carolingians. They had founded a lay state on the ruins of the Lombard kingdom and the Exarchate of Ravenna. Their secretaries zealously drew up and stored in the Lateran archives documents purporting to prove the validity and antiquity of their master's new claims. This was the



origin of that famous forgery, the Donation of Constantine, on which the Church for so many centuries founded its rights to its temporal rule over central Italy; it is in fact only in the present-day phase of the conflict over the temporal power that its alleged grant by Constantine has been dropped as a fundamental argument.

To the same epoch belong forged Decretals, the pseudo-Isidore, and other works of zealous but misguided monkish secretaries, determined at all costs to strengthen the central power of Rome, and accomplishing — for such are the incongruities of history — a more durable work with their ignorant and dishonest goose quills than the ancient Romans had with their redoubtable swords. A succession of able Popes who followed Charlemagne through the ninth century down to the year 888, constantly asserted prerogatives based on these documents. In 875 Pope John VIII crowned Charles the Bald Emperor, and on this occasion formally asserted the undeniable right of the Popes to grant the imperial crown.

Had the successors of John been able to carry on this tradition and movement, it seems quite possible that by the year 1000, which is the goal of this chapter, the Papacy might have capped the entire feudal edifice with an undisputed religious kingship akin to the Caliphate. But the history of Europe was not destined to take this turn. For just at the critical moment the Papacy ceased to produce men of ambition and ability. A series of feeble Pontiffs reflected no new dignity on Rome. Feudalism was breaking up



Europe into small fragments, and Papal interests became more localized. Roman families fought, bribed, and intrigued for an office that soon lost all sanctity. In the middle of the tenth century a woman, the famous Marozia, held the Papacy in her gift; she placed one lover and three sons and grandsons in the Papal chair. And when later, in 962, Pope John XII crowned the Emperor Otto in St. Peters', so far was he from asserting the claim of John VIII that he acknowledged himself the Emperor's subject, and accepted that the Romans should swear that no election to the Papacy could be held valid without the Emperor's consent.

And here a general remark must be made. There is no continuous record in western annals that approaches the twenty centuries, more or less, of the Papacy. Within that period such reversals of policy as that just described have been of constant occurrence; Popes have come in series good and bad; and those series as often as not have come to an abrupt end. So that, although the general interrelation between the great European movements and the Papacy may always be looked for as a prime factor, there has frequently been a remarkable secondary factor to be found in the make-up of the Papacy at any given time. At the close of the tenth century one of these rapid transitions was about to take place. The German Emperors stretched their hand out over Rome to protect her sacred institution. In 999 the learned Gerbert was placed on the Papal throne by Otto III, and the German influence paved the way for the



series of great Popes that was soon to arise and to carry the Papacy to its highest point.

During the tenth century however, when the Papacy was at so low an ebb, a strong religious feeling was at work in Europe, a precursor of the great movement of the centuries to come. It was an age of failure, of devastation, of misery, and of ignorance. What wealth there was belonged to the Church and to a few great lords. From the mass of the poor a cry of desolation went up, a despairing cry to the Consoler and Redeemer Jesus. And under these conditions an old belief of the Church reappeared under a new guise.

The earliest Christians had been second adventists; they expected the immediate reappearance of Jesus. This belief gradually died down, and was no longer fundamental at the time of the conversion of Constantine. That event, and the subsequent triumph of Christianity, resulted in its complete eclipse, and within fifty years the Council of Laodicea condemned the Apocalypse, in which the doctrine of the second coming found its extreme expression. The action of the Council of Laodicea was fortunately not followed up by later councils, yet by the middle of the fifth century the belief in the second coming was practically extinct. Five hundred years later it awoke again, and took the form of a widespread conviction that the year 1000 would witness the descent of Jesus Christ on earth.

Another aspect of religious emotion blended with



this. One of the curious sides of the revolution of Constantine had been witnessed in Jerusalem. Christians flocked to the sacred city. The pagan temples were torn down. Churches were built on sites that were conjectured to be associated with the presence of Jesus. The Empress Helena performed a memorable pilgrimage, and presently was found to have set a widely followed example. Pilgrimage became the test of fervour, and great was the pilgrim's reward. At Jerusalem everything was miraculous, from the marvellous success of the Galilean peasant three centuries after his death, — a very real miracle, — to the extraordinary output by the local clergy of Christian relics in quantities almost sufficient to supply the insatiable demand made for such objects by the credulity of the dark and other ages. The subject must not be dwelt on, it lends itself too easily to the wit of the mere scoffer. Here we are less concerned with ridiculing the clumsy, absurd, often indecent, objects and legends foisted on a superstitious world, than we are with perceiving that the simplicity, however absurd, with which such things were manufactured and accepted merely expressed the spirit of an age. And that spirit, even if deeply tainted with ignorance, fear, and superstition, was a spirit of faith deeply imbued with the aspiration for higher and better things, love, good will, and charity.

From the fourth century to the tenth the tradition of pilgrimage was continuous. With the myriad shrines of Europe now well supplied with a varied assortment of miracle-working relics, ascribed to



Jesus and his saints, pilgrimage, accompanied by suitable oblations, became one of the great forms of penance for the sinner, of pious profit for the Church. Jerusalem continued to draw many pilgrims, and that even after the Arabian conquest, as the Caliphs tolerated the Christian churches. But a climax came with the year 1000. All through desolated Europe the belief had rapidly spread that the culminating miracle was at hand: "For the Lord himself," as St. Paul had written, "shall descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be in the Lord."

And so, to meet the Lord descending on his holy city of Jerusalem, many thousands started on a long and weary journey in that very year 999 in which Gerbert became Pope. On the night which the Julian calendar assigned for the close of that year, a great multitude stood awaiting a splendid dawn in the Vale of Jehosaphat. We have no record of how they looked, of their joys, fears, excitement, and crushing disappointment, — and yet that sombre picture haunts the imagination. It evokes the valley steeped in obscurity, the mass of pilgrims gathered there at the cost of so much suffering, the darkness of their ignorance, the dismal gloom of that next morning of cruel unfulfilment, and the yearning emotion, the faith, the throb of that aspiration for what is better and higher which, more than any god



or myth, is the real redeemer of mankind. The unfortunate men and women who stood disconsolate in the vale of Jehosaphat, looking up into the godless sky, may stand for ever-suffering, ever-ignorant, and ever-hoping humanity, steadfast in the divine illusion that a new and more perfect life is at hand.



## CHAPTER XII

### AFTER THE MILLENNIUM

“As the third year after the year 1000 opened, a similar event took place in nearly the whole world, but especially in Italy and France: there began a rebuilding of the churches. Most of them, however, were properly built and there was no need of change; but among all Christian countries arose a rivalry as to which should have the most beautiful sanctuaries. Everywhere, in the cathedrals, in the monasteries, in the smallest parishes, the sanctuaries were improved.” Such is the unadorned and remarkable statement of the chronicler Glaber. And it gives perhaps a clearer impression than any other could of what occurred in Europe immediately after the millennium.

There are moments in the life of nations, epochs of ascending vitality, that baffle the investigator until he turns for an explanation to the processes of nature as seen in the lives of plants or of animals. For a brief spell nothing can resist the upward push of the stem, the bud, the flower, nothing can resist the impetuous rush of youthful sap. In historical movements it is the same, though the complexity of the factors is beyond the power of human statement. The mind fails to grasp and words fail to describe even that which is perceived. But we recognise, we know, that at about a certain date, a nation or even



many nations will show symptoms that some such process is at work, and, although we can never explain how, we can see that it passes through the natural sequence: the youthful push, the blossoming, and then decay. We shall now be concerned with just such a process.

What we shall see, then, in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is the tremendously vital push of youthful Europe under the stimulating shock of the two great figures of the Middle Ages, the Roman priest and the feudal soldier, each with his weakness and each with his strength. The priest craves for emasculated power, based on the ignorance and moral cowardice of those he hopes to rule; yet he founds that power on the doctrine of the Christian virtues, and more than once succeeds in arraying faith and altruism in his cause. The soldier, on the other hand, enjoys and abuses the power that comes from the direct application of might; he enforces order when it suits his interests and fancies; he disturbs order wherever he finds a weaker neighbour; he perpetuates warfare, for it is the source of his supremacy, and therefore of his enjoyment. Between these two ideals a struggle was inevitable and the first great victory was won by the Church over feudalism when it secured the establishment of the Truce of God.

The power and ambition of the Papacy shot up with great vigour after the pontificate of Gerbert. Several great Popes arose, none greater than Gregory VII or Innocent III. They strove for the supremacy of Europe. They hurled feudalism against Islam, against



the Greek Empire, against the unorthodox Christians of southern France. They reinforced the organization of Rome, and in no way more effectively than in the creation of new monastic orders, — the Franciscans, preachers of humility and charity, the Dominicans, preachers of the Roman dogma and the Roman supremacy. Even feudalism was caught by the example, and established its own orders, Knights Templars, Hospitallers, and others.

Nor was this the only lesson feudalism was taught. From its conflict with the ethical teaching of the Church, and from its contact during the crusades with the superior civilization and polish of the East, it derived many of the elements of the code of chivalry that was to cloak it with its brightest and most attractive colours. But from the East also, it was to bring back to Europe germs of scepticism which all the eloquence of the Dominicans and the homicidal fury of Innocent could not destroy. If after the eleventh century emperors and kings and statesmen tend towards incredulity and atheism, is it not that they have seen the East, that they have tasted defeat at the hands of those who believed not in Jesus but in Mohammed? And may we not even guess that at heart great feudal lords might view with suspicion and disdain the plebeian of Galilee whose cross they bore, and his plebeian representative in the chair of St. Peter, on whose behalf they had been made to bite the dust before the scimitars of Islam and the triumphant shout: God is God, and Mohammed is his Prophet!



Mighty monarchs like the Emperor Frederick II became infected with disbelief, and knightly orders, like that of St. John, and even whole provinces like Provence or Languedoc; and Rome succeeded in meeting this threat of unbelief, more terrible than the political threat of the empire and of the new monarchies. She uncompromisingly challenged heresy; she enlisted the feudal sword in her service; she exterminated the Albigenses and set back the clock of intellectual freedom for many years.

Again mixed factors prevail. If Provence had developed an anti-Roman mode of thought, the cause was not wholly in the reëstablished contact with the Orient. An occidental cause, soon to play the most far-reaching part, was already at work. This was the formation of new languages that were destined soon to reduce the Latin tongue to the same dust as the more fragile structures of the Latin architects. And it was in part to resist this new birth of mankind in the discovery of new languages that the Church produced and supported its universities and its scholastic philosophy.

For the demands of this active and complex age had of necessity developed the bands of monkish secretaries, perpetrators of forged decretals and other convenient frauds, into something more elaborate, — schools of priests or aspirants studying the canon and civil law, and thence slowly pushing on to studies less closely connected with the glory and power of the Church. Before long great universities were arising, Bologna, Paris, Cambridge, Salamanca, Oxford; scho-



lasticism, theology, medicine, and law flourished, and unorthodoxy too in slight degree; and great controversies arose, like that between realists and nominalists. In all this the East again played its part, and through the Arabian philosopher Averrhoes the ideas of Aristotle filtered into the European mind once more, and were for the moment caught up into an ecclesiastical philosophy by the "angel of the schools," Thomas Aquinas.

Such were some of the currents and countercurrents of Europe during this epoch; and to finish the picture let us add just a glimpse of the external aspect of the Western world. It was very dirty, unsanitary, for the most part sordid. Its rapidly increasing population spoke rough jargons, compounds of Teutonic and Latin speech. They believed in extreme things, force and miracles. They obeyed equally the priest and the baron. Their thatched hovels rose in unsavoury fungus heaps, relieved in very few spots as yet by burgher opulence, but with two mighty and contrasting structures dominating them at either hand: the dungeon and the cathedral. Into those two portentous forms of mortared stone these three centuries stamped their record. The feudal keep, ever greater, more massive, more crenellated, complex, and forbidding, was the symbol of petty tyranny that nothing but the advance of science could obliterate. The cathedral, rising so rapidly to all its flamboyant glory, twisting its Gothic spires, its ascetic carvings or grotesque gargoyles towards heaven, was the symbol of the new life of the Church. For before the year



1000 men had been content to stretch their hands to the sky awaiting their redeemer; now they awaited him no longer, and left to masonry the task of continuing their prayer and of proclaiming their faith. Before the millennium the Church was looking to the future and leaving the present to take care of itself; after the millennium it glorified the past and set to work to improve present opportunities.

Having thus given some impression of what the epoch stands for in general terms, we must now view some of its more salient events in due historical order.

It was during the eleventh century that the last wave of disrupting invasion, that which is more peculiarly associated with the Normans, finally found its level. The Normans settled. They adopted and perfected military feudalism. They founded states, Normandy, Naples, and England. And this culmination of their efforts, at a moment when Mohammedanism was losing its vigour, tended to give Europe the opportunity of adjusting itself and growing up to its new institutions.

The enforced customs of feudalism grew into a mass of which a part found strict legal expression. And the growth of canon law and of feudal law involved their special study, involved schools, universities. In the early years of the eleventh century we find a collection of capitularies made for a priestly school at Padua, and a hundred years later Ugolino da Porta Ravignana added a collation of feudal law



to the code of Justinian. Primogeniture, an outstanding feature of feudal law, becomes the established rule of the French monarchy just before the year 1000.

Feudalism in its early and most military age meant a vast number of semi-independent petty tyrants constantly fighting with one another. War was their livelihood, their pastime, their justification; and they finally had to invent a way of turning even peace into war by jousting at one another in tourneys. At the very worst epoch, when Europe resounded with clanging armour and the sky was darkened with the smoke of destruction, the Church intervened. This outrage on humanity must cease; there must be a respite. And between the year of the millennium and that of the Norman conquest of England, the Truce of God was established, and a system of land peace, and, in a few larger cities, peace associations were formed in restraint of feudal license. The Truce of God rapidly became "an elaborate penal code for the protection of special days and seasons";<sup>1</sup> a code enforced by the ecclesiastical machinery, penance, confession, excommunication.

With Henry III, in the middle of the eleventh century, the imperial power reached a very high point. The German influence still prevailed in the city of Rome, where the Papacy had not altogether maintained the higher level which Gerbert had reached. In 1046 Henry proceeded to Rome at the head of a considerable army; he deposed several claimants to

<sup>1</sup> Fisher, *Medieval Emp.* I, 200.



the Papacy, and installed another German priest on the throne in the person of Clement II.

In 1056 the Emperor died, leaving a son six years of age who became the Emperor Henry IV. His youth was taken advantage of, and disorder broke out in Germany, which culminated in the famous war of the Investitures (1073-1122) and in the great struggle between Henry and the Papacy.

Gregory VII, who ascended the Papal throne in 1073, was the monk Hildebrand of Cluny. This famous monastery of the Benedictine Order had been founded early in the tenth century free from lay suzerainty. It had acquired great wealth and many houses. It had encouraged study, practised religious virtue, and turned its attention to the reform and success of the Church. It had already sent forth from its gates several great churchmen, and was now to produce the greatest of them all.

Hildebrand was probably of German extraction, though born at Soano in Tuscany (1020). He was brought up to a religious life in Italy, and passed some years at Rome before he went to Cluny, with which he was more closely to be associated. His personality marked him out for important missions. He became chaplain and adviser of Gregory VI, of Leo IX, of Henry III; and in these years he threw all his weight into a movement for a fundamental reform in the mode of selecting the Popes that would give the Papacy autonomy and independence. That movement was not completed during his lifetime, but it



will be more convenient for our purpose to deal with it as a whole now.

Until the twelfth century, when the Conclave and the College of Cardinals provided the mechanism of the Papal election, the choice of a Pope was effected in various ways. In early times there had been the vote of the congregation; later, the tumultuous acclamation of priests and people; Emperors had appointed; the office of Patrician had been devised and had carried the right to nominate; force and fraud, Teuton swords and Roman wiles, all had equally contributed to the selection of the Vicar of God on earth. Now, under the push of the men of Cluny, the Papacy determined to obtain complete control of its most important function. And this resulted, from the middle of the eleventh to the middle of the twelfth century, in the creation of the machinery of the Conclave and the College of Cardinals.

The cardinals represent a slow development. Originally they were the high ecclesiastics who formed the staff of the Pope. To them was now given the exclusive right to select a Pope; and in fact, if not in theory, this meant appointing one of their own number. The electoral conclave in which this process was conducted gradually evolved its traditions and rules. The Emperor and the kings watched its proceedings jealously, and eventually Spain, France, and Austria claimed and exercised the right of each excluding one cardinal from the succession. A two-thirds majority was declared to be necessary. A system of electoral intrigue grew up. And in general the result obtained



was the election of an elderly and diplomatic churchman to a post that frequently required the vigour and boldness of youth. What Hildebrand saw in this institution was the means of withdrawing the Papacy from under the influence of the Emperor.

When he became Pope in 1073 he promptly displayed all the energy of a radical reformer. He attacked simony, — the traffic in ecclesiastical benefices that was largely stimulated by the feudal invasion of the Church. He insisted on the rule, hitherto never complied with, of the celibacy of the regular clergy. Above all he stood out against lay investiture, the grant of a church benefice by a layman to a cleric. For in that growing custom he saw the inevitable triumph of the soldier and the vassalage of the priest. He declared it a sin, and the word implied all the ecclesiastical pains and penalties, for a priest to accept a benefice from a layman under conditions. And this brought him into direct and bitter conflict with the Empire.

About one half of the land of Germany was now held by the Church, under feudal tenure. The Emperors had, on the whole, encouraged this state of things; for they found it easier to raise money from the well-developed lands of non-combatant churchmen, than to gain adequate support from the turbulent and economically careless barons. But this stroke of Gregory, if successful, would transfer the real control of Germany from the Emperor to the Pope, and that Henry could not accept.

The Pope secured the aid of the Norman kingdom of Naples and of a dissatisfied section of German



barons. He himself wielded the most formidable weapons. In 1076 he pronounced judgment against Henry; he excommunicated and he deposed him. The Papal sentence produced a sensation. For it was a declaration that the supreme sovereignty of Europe was based on a contract in terms of divine law of which the Pope was arbiter; it meant an awe-inspiring exclusion from the communion of the Church that seemed a preliminary, in that superstitious age, of all the torments of the future Hell.

It may be noticed here that the sentence of excommunication against the Emperor was based by Gregory on proper precedents. Those precedents, however, in the writings or decrees of Anselm, Hadrian, Isidore of Seville, and the pseudo Isidore, were in the main a series of forgeries and encroachments. Any fraud appeared justified to the wielders of the clerical pen in their struggle for supremacy, and even when they were not consciously dishonest their standards of accuracy were so low as to render their documents almost valueless even when honestly intentioned. To illustrate this let us take the words of the pious Agnellus, bishop of Ravenna, who compiled the biographies of his predecessors in that see: — “Where I have not found any history of these bishops and have not been able by conversation with aged men . . . to obtain information concerning them . . . I have composed the life myself with the help of God and the prayers of the brethren.” The age was somewhat too imaginative to be altogether trusted in matters of evidence!



For a brief spell Hildebrand triumphed. Henry was deserted by his followers. Finding resistance hopeless, he fell back on diplomacy and met the priest with his own weapons. At Canossa, in Tuscany, the Pope admitted the penitent and suppliant Emperor into his presence after he had humbly waited at the castle gates three days for his audience. The scene is perhaps the most dramatic and pregnant of the mediæval epoch, and in its externals represents the highest level touched by the Papacy.

No sooner released from his excommunication, Henry resumed the struggle. Gregory replied by his famous decree of investitures, and by once more excommunicating Henry (1078-1080). But the Emperor had now got hold of the situation. He appointed an anti-Pope, Clement III, marched on Rome, and captured the city. Gregory's last years closed in defeat, and he died under Norman protection at Salerno in the year 1086.

During the next forty years the struggle between Popes and Emperors continued, still ostensibly over the question of investiture, but also in large degree over the question of whether the Germans should establish direct feudal supremacy over Italy. And both these questions were covered in the party distinction of Guelph and Ghibelline, the former being that of Papal and burgher rights, the latter of imperial and baronial ones.

In the year 1122 the Concordat of Worms marked a truce and a compromise that gave a working basis for the relations of Church and State in the matter



of investiture. Bishops or Abbots were to be elected in the presence of the Emperor or his delegate, and were then to receive the sceptre from him. The consecration and the giving of the pastoral ring and staff remained in ecclesiastical hands.

This same period of half a century or so had witnessed a notable development in the conditions of Papal Rome, an indirect result of its struggle for supremacy. "What had heretofore been a church was now only a Curia, that is, a battlefield for litigants, a chancery of scribes, of notaries, of fiscal agents, where business was transacted by means of privileges, dispensations, safe-conducts; . . . a European mart for priests of all countries hunting for benefices. . . . The pomp of the local divine service has disappeared, submerged under a flood of business, of suits, of pardons, of indulgences, of absolutions; orders are sent out to all parts of Europe, even to Asia; a staff of several hundred persons has become necessary; their allegiance is to the Curia; their ambition, to climb a step higher in their corporation; their objective, to make business pay, to increase taxes, to raise the profits. . . ." <sup>1</sup> In 1123 Callixtus II summoned in his own name a council of the Church; and by presiding over its sessions marked the beginning of that Papal control over the councils of the Church that was to find its logical conclusion at the Council of the Vatican in the year 1870. And while the Curia explored the Decretals and affirmed Papal authority, the newborn universities were study-

<sup>1</sup> Döllinger, *Papsthum*.



ing theology, turning to philosophy, slowly building up the doctrines of the new age, while the feudal soldier was beginning to crusade in the East, opening a way for commercial and intellectual influences that were soon to leave their mark on western Europe.

In the year 1095 Urban II, attended by some three hundred clerics, held a council of bishops at Piacenza, to receive an embassy from Constantinople. This embassy had come to urge the pressing need of the Eastern Empire for support against the threat of Mohammedan conquest. But the Pope and his bishops showed little enthusiasm at the idea of a holy war; they were far more concerned to attack their arch enemy the Emperor Henry, and they had little sympathy with the Eastern Church, with its divergent ritual and dogma, its severance from Rome and latent claim for Christian supremacy.

Urban then visited France. In the cruder and more enthusiastic West he found a strong vein of sympathy with the Christians of the East, a vein still not quite exhausted at this day. Monks, people, soldiers, all in their varying moods, responded to the call of a great religious enterprise. Urban needed their support. He was bent on a difficult course, for in that very summer he issued a decree of excommunication against Philip I of France for contracting an adulterous marriage. So in November, at a council held at Clermont, Urban followed up his attack on the king of France by preaching a holy war for the delivery of the Holy Sepulchre from the infidels. The



response was immediate. The superstition and fanaticism of centuries were instantly caught up in a vivid formula, and the imagination of Europe suddenly went wild as barons, monks, beggars, even children, put on the sign of the cross and vowed they would deliver Jerusalem from bondage. It was to take nearly two centuries of wretched failure to dispel one of the most widespread and splendid illusions of the Western world.

The process of disillusion was marked by incidents of the most striking character. The enterprise was so fantastic that a modern historian, von Sybel, has said of the First Crusade: "It was much as if a large army were now to embark in balloons in order to conquer an island between the earth and the moon which was also expected to contain the earthly Paradise." But apart from their follies, their successes, and their reverses, in all directions the crusades bore fruit. They developed the ritualistic or chivalrous side of feudalism. They fed legend, and from legend the budding vernacular literature of Europe. They showed monstrous sides in their brutality, and mixed credulousness and impiety, yet they stimulated the seaborne trade of the Mediterranean. And they added a charm of the romantic and mysterious to the severity of the cardinal Christian virtues.

Lives were lost by the half million, and horrible massacres stained the Christian arms. But fortunately these are not the facts that immediately concern us, for the Church itself must receive all our attention. It may be noted, therefore, that Peter the



Hermit preached the First, and Bernard of Clairvaux the Second Crusade. And with Bernard and the middle of the twelfth century we are faced by yet another phase in the history of the Church.

With Bernard we reach the struggle between intellectual freedom and intellectual tyranny, the great struggle through which the Europe we know gradually evolved itself out of the Middle Ages. The schools had become important institutions by the beginning of the twelfth century, and scholasticism was in its full tide. Scholasticism is perhaps best defined as the sum of the theological and philosophical ideas evolved by the Middle Ages in the attempt to conciliate Christian dogma with general knowledge. And the effort of scholasticism in this direction was summarized in the great controversy of the period, that of Realism and Nominalism. The Realists approached all phenomena from the starting-point that general or universal ideas were real things, while their opponents declared that they were only convenient names or formulas. The instant this conflict touched Christian dogma, it raised capital questions, as for instance in the matter of the Trinity, the Communion, and the other mysteries. And the Nominalists were of necessity the party of flexible interpretation, and therefore more under the influence of change, of new ideas, of all that makes for unorthodoxy, reform, heresy.

In this contest of ideas we need not pause until the name of Abélard is reached. He was the eldest son of a nobleman and gave up his inheritance for the sake of study. He worked. He was endowed with the



golden gift of eloquence. He travelled from school to school, as his father might have from castle to castle, disputing against the masters, tilting hard in oratorical tourney against the Realists. His reputation grew. He proceeded to Paris, settling there about the year 1113.

Abélard was soon the most conspicuous figure among the schoolmen of Paris. Men and women flocked to his teaching. Under this human stimulus, and at a moment of such vital activity, his voice took on new accents, sought and found fresh modes of expression. He became modern; and in his love letters to Héloïse gave Europe the first masterpiece of its modern thought. He created alarm and jealousy, and was persecuted for his amours with Héloïse. In 1120 he wrote his Introduction to theology, and in the following year a council held at Soissons condemned it to the flames and its author to prison. But his voice could not be stilled. He preached, directly against the Curia and Roman formalism, that the thought was of the essence of the deed. He began textual criticism. And finally, in 1139, Bernard of Clairvaux denounced him as a heretic, and secured his condemnation to prison and perpetual silence.

Curiously enough Bernard, who had defeated the first champion of free enquiry, had himself trodden a very similar path. He had criticized severely the conduct of unworthy popes, and of cardinals whom he described as satraps, and had won so great an authority that in 1130 he became the arbiter of the Church and seated Innocent II on the Papal throne.



Bernard's Pope came into violent conflict with a disciple of Abélard, Arnold of Brescia. Arnold was as bold, perhaps bolder than his master, but with him criticism and unrest found a political expression. He became a leader of revolt at Brescia, was summoned to Rome in 1139 and sentenced to banishment and silence, — silence the characteristic remedy of Bernard and obscurantism, the torturing penalty of conscience and emotion awake and straining for life, silence as it veils the deep look of the Florentine monk that Fra Angelico painted, cloaked in black, with sombre face and tortured eyes, his lips sealed by an inscrutable and menacing forefinger.

Arnold fled, and found refuge in Switzerland. Even Rome stirred under the impulse of the times. In 1143 the city revolted against the Pope, a republic was proclaimed, and Arnold was summoned to its helm. The Republic declared against the temporal power of the Popes on general as well as on particular grounds, — but the arguments can be better dealt with in connection with a somewhat similar set of circumstances that arose seven centuries later. Arnold's republic was a precursor of those of Rienzi and of Mazzini; it was an imitator of the republic of the ancient Romans in its forms and ceremonial.

In 1155, with the Englishman Nicholas Brakespear Pope under the style of Hadrian IV, the power of Arnold was broken. The most powerful weapon yet forged by the Papal artificers smote the rebellious city, for Rome was placed under an interdict. This was the wholesale application to an entire community of



the same sort of process as that which Hildebrand had meted out to Henry. The services of the Church suddenly ceased. No baptism and no funeral, no marriage and no mass could take place in Rome under the usual rites. The doors of its churches were nailed up; its inhabitants were vowed to spiritual death. This was more than Arnold's waning power could resist. He fled; he was captured; then sentenced and executed out of hand.

The restoration of Papal power in Rome had been largely helped by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. But as soon as the Pope was securely reinstalled his pretensions rose at once to the full height measured by Hildebrand, and the momentary truce between Guelph and Ghibelline was over. In the struggle that followed, it was Frederick who came out worsted; and in the year 1190 he came to a miserable end while leading a German contingent in the Third Crusade. Eight years later, Innocent III was elected Pope, and rapidly drove the Papacy to its highest pitch of power.

The favourite weapon of Innocent was excommunication. He excommunicated Frederick II for not taking the Cross, for not starting for the Holy Land, for starting at the wrong moment, for his conduct while there, for signing an advantageous peace. He was not content with excommunicating the Emperor, but excommunicated the kings of France and of England. And it need hardly be pointed out that even a spiritual weapon employed to excess must in time lose its edge. He diverted the Fourth Crusade from Jeru-



saalem to Constantinople, and after the sack of that ancient city, he forced on the Emperor Alexius the reunion of the Greek Church as the price of his throne. He asserted feudal overlordship in Naples and Sicily, obtained almost as strong a hold over northern Italy, threatened to depose King John of England, and generally displayed a redoubtable activity. One phase of that activity brings us into contact with one of the greatest figures of the Middle Ages and must therefore delay us a moment.

Francis of Assisi was born in 1182. His youth was characteristic of one aspect of the life of his times. The increasing settlement, growth, and economic movement of Europe had produced an upper class based on wealth, and intent on its obvious reward, that is pleasure. This was markedly the case among the Italian cities, and Francis of Assisi, as a young man of fortune, revelled and dissipated until, after some sobering incidents, he was seized by a reaction and found religion. He suddenly took to humility, poverty, and good works; and the rest of his life was devoted to what may best be described as the creation of the slumming and settlement work of the Middle Ages. His personal magnetism was great and his example was followed, so that by 1219 he had 5000 followers. Innocent, after some hesitation, incorporated these new monks as the Franciscan Order, and sent them forth to beg their living, to mingle with the poor, to do good works, and to preach salvation through Rome.

The last years of St. Francis were notable. He



journeyed to Jerusalem to visit the Holy Sepulchre which the Pope had placed under the custody of his monks, an arrangement that holds good to the present day. His return to Italy was marked by a rapid decline of his health, and by many of the portents dear to the ecclesiastical biographer. But the miracles that dogged the footsteps of Francis are worthy of special notice, and cannot be dismissed altogether; the manner of their relation was both important and interesting. For the writings of St. Francis, hymns, sermons, and other works, and those of the enthusiastic disciples who related his life, are the first title deeds of the Italian tongue. Here is a new language, a new literature, marked by all the attributes of youth, freshness, boundless faith, a new view of life and of humankind.

As to the miracles of St. Francis this much may be said. It seems clear that he practised an extreme asceticism, and that for many months before his end he was in an abnormal nervous condition. That being so, there is no real difficulty in accepting the chief miracle connected with his name, that of his having received the stigmata, that is, the marks of the nails of the cross of Jesus. Stigmata have been suggested to a hypnotic subject in a hospital, to say nothing of the almost numberless cases that can be quoted in religious, and even police records, besides that of St. Francis. The miracle is, in fact, possible, though on the whole it is perhaps safer to doubt it.

The best reason for this doubt lies not in any supposed impossibility of the fact, but in the nature of



the record of the other miracles attributed to St. Francis. They are, on the whole, of an almost inconceivably childish and trivial character, and can obviously be dismissed in their supernatural significance. Yet, with all their childishness and triviality, clothed in their sweet and simple words, they have arrested the mind, moved the imagination of mankind for many generations. And their magic is precisely that of little children, playing at fairies and goblins, speaking words that reason rejects with tones, and imaginings, and aspirations that make the heart throb. The whole secret is there. And in piercing it we pierce the greatest secret of the mediæval Church. Christianity is for one brief moment reborn. The primitive faith of the man of Galilee, his gospel of the poor, his humanity and humility, are echoed by the man of Assisi; and yet between the two, between the Aramæan and the Italian, lay the gulf in which the decadent philosophizing of the Greeks had for so long fermented with the administrative pre-occupation of the Latins.

The Franciscan Order was soon followed by others, Dominicans, Augustinians. Their monks became a new battle array fighting the cause of the Christian Commonwealth of Rome. The friars, as the mendicants were known, invaded France, England, Germany. They fastened on the schools, formed guilds of teachers, and colleges, and vigorously pushed on the growth of the universities. Between 1257 and 1283 the Sorbonne, Merton, and Peterhouse were founded.



This has carried us a good deal beyond Innocent III, all of whose achievements are not yet related. In 1201 the Fourth Crusade was launched against Constantinople; three years later Simon de Montfort and the barons of the West were let loose on the south of France to extirpate various heresies that had taken root among the Alpine valleys and along the Mediterranean coast to the Pyrenees and the Atlantic. Under the sign of the cross fire and sword laid low the new-sprung civilization of the South. Its budding literature, its lordly houses, its independent thought touched with oriental ideas, were wiped out of existence. Its cities were sacked and burned with the cruel ferocity that so often accompanies a rooted religious conviction. Thus with interdict and excommunication, with crusade to the east and crusade to the west, did Innocent fulminate from Rome the opponents of the Papal supremacy.

After the death of Innocent, in 1216, the momentum acquired by the Papacy served to carry it through the century. The mediæval Church had reared its complex fabric on the chaos of the Dark Ages and had almost attained its ambition. Its wealth was fabulous; its moral hold immense; yet in reality the strain was already telling at both these points, while scepticism was raising a doubting head. In England the famous Statute of Mortmain was passed in 1279, prohibiting all further grants of land to the Church. The king of France was not so well placed, and the attempt of Philip the Fair to tax ecclesiastical property was met by the famous bull *Clericis*



*laicos* forbidding it. A bitter struggle followed. Finally, in 1303, it culminated in the issue by Boniface VIII of the bull *Unam Sanctam*, affirming the spiritual supremacy over the temporal: "Whoever resists this power thus ordained by God, resists the ordination of God, unless, like the Manichæan, he claims that there are two beginnings. This we consider false and heretical, since according to the testimony of Moses, God created the heavens and the earth not in the beginnings but in the beginning. Indeed we declare, announce, and define that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff."

But the time for this sort of pronouncement was already past; the Papal sword had been blunted by too long use. Philip turned against the Pope. Two of his knights, at the head of a body of retainers, plucked Boniface from the Papal chair and carried him off a prisoner. Heaven and Europe were not perceptibly moved by this outrage. The French king took possession of Rome itself, and after the death of Boniface a few months later, procured the election of one of his own subjects to the Papacy as Clement V. Four years later, in 1309, Clement removed from Rome to Avignon, and the Popes rapidly sank to a position not much higher than that of chaplain of the king of France.

And so, by Philip's vigorous buffet, the soldier had suddenly put down the priest, and a rough equilibrium had been restored. For a while we shall see the Papacy depressed, then later coming to a new



period of vigour, blossoming into Renaissance splendour, only to meet another crisis, that of the Reformation. In tracing the history of the Church through these movements, we shall have occasion to look back at several matters that have not received all the attention they should in this chapter.



## CHAPTER XIII

### DANTE, PETRARCH, AND BORGIA

JUST as the corporations of working monks or the ambitious churchmen of high degree were twisting the simple and humble forms of the Romanesque and the Norman styles into the high pointed arches and flying buttresses of the lofty Gothic, Thomas Aquinas was building up the theology of the Church with an intricate arabesque of Aristotelian ideas. His life began in 1226, and ended in 1274, the very year in which Dante first beheld Beatrice; and his work may be thought of, in one sense, as the last great constructive effort of the Latin tongue and the Latin mind. For he added a little to the great theocratic conception of Augustine and to the great legal conception of Justinian.

A new world was stirring as Thomas Aquinas pursued his studies, at Monte Cassino, at Naples, at Cologne, at Paris. One of his teachers, Albertus Magnus, had extended erudition even beyond the bounds of human knowledge, it was thought. Roger Bacon's experiments in physics were enabling him to foretell the inventions of the nineteenth century. The magnifying glass, gunpowder, the compass were coming into use, and with them the shock of ideas that came from new languages and extending travel. Even in the schools novelty was in the air. Students



travelled to the great Moorish universities of Toledo and Cordova; the works of the great Arabian doctors, Avicenna and Averrhoes, were translated into Latin.

Aquinas took what the East offered, not only from the Arabian commentators and translators of Aristotle, but from the sources opened by the Latin conquest of Constantinople, whence a thin stream of Greek manuscripts had begun to flow towards the West. "Theology," he declared, "may borrow from philosophy, not for her needs, but to make clearer the dogmas she calls on us to believe." From this starting-point he built up his *Summa Totius Theologiæ*, a compendium so masterly as to remain to this day the main fabric of Roman theological science. In it dogma and philosophy met as in a crucible artfully heated to precisely the right temperature and became permanently wedded, Latin and Greek, pagan and Christian. In other words, the Church which had started from decadent Greek thought had now taken a step backward and blended her system with the thought of Greece of the golden age of Plato and Aristotle. Yet even this last reinforcing of the doctrinal position of Rome was not sufficient to enable her to keep down very long the tide now rapidly rising.

The new languages were growing with irresistible force and extraordinary rapidity. While the hymns and legends of St. Francis were marvellous propagants of a merely popular literature, higher intellectual levels were fast being reached. About the time of Thomas Aquinas' death Brunetti set to work to



translate the *Ethics* of Aristotle into Italian, and not long after that Dante, after beginning a poem on the future life in Latin, changed his mind, took to his own Florentine dialect and produced the *Divina Commedia*.

The date at which the action of this poem is set is the year 1300; and it is marvellous, almost incredible, to consider how swiftly the new Europe had moved away from its Latinism to reach this point. Here, rising in one magnificent burst from the litter of so many centuries, Italian had put forth a flower so perfect that in the six hundred years that have gone by since Dante's day nothing has been produced to rival it. Literature had spanned the full arch of national life; philosophers and poets, as well as peasants, could think now in their own vernacular. And that being so it is important to see what they would find in Dante's poem:

"O voi ch' avette gl' intelleti sani  
Mirate la dottrina che s' asconde  
Sotto 'l velame dei versi strani."

Dante, then, viewing him historically, is the flag bearer of a new tongue, a new mode; he has flung himself free from the Latin as a vehicle of thought. Yet the ideas with which his *Divine Comedy* is impregnated are far from being as novel as his method. On the contrary, they do little else than echo those of Aquinas. It may be that he inclines more towards Plato than did the master of theologians, and less towards Aristotle, but viewed from so wide an angle as that at which we stand, this difference is not worth



dwelling on. Dante's theology and philosophy are orthodox, and there is only one detail in which he heralds, though in the slightest sense, the coming age of revolt; as a Ghibelline, a believer in the equality of Pope and Emperor, he criticizes the action of the Papacy. As a representative of public opinion, he proves that if Philip the Fair could strike down Boniface VIII, it was largely because the violent action of the Popes had at last alienated popular support.

The great work of Dante therefore, was the part he played in creating a new language which provided for the first time a natural channel through which the ideas that lay at the base of the Church could flow down among the increasing mass of educated and reflective men that the improving conditions of Europe were producing. And the wonderful style and imagery of his lines served to stamp them broadly and indelibly on the generations that followed the poet. For in less than fifty years from his death chairs had already been founded in several Italian universities for the study of his works.

Incidentally another topic is suggested by Dante's name, for in him is to be found at the highest that doctrine of the gradation of punishment associated with the idea of Purgatory. Whether Purgatory is properly to be described as an original Christian doctrine may safely be left to the combats of doctrinal theology. The idea, however, may be found full-fledged in the mythological literature of the Ancients, and it was thence that it found its way into Christian-



ity. By the time of Gregory I it was well established. But its greatest significance was reached a little later, when the Church began to develop the pains and penalties of the future life into a regular system of moral and political terrorism and of finance. In the later developments that came just before the Reformation, the financial side of the doctrine of Purgatory overshadowed all else. Masses to release souls from its tortures formed one of the great sources of ecclesiastical revenue. But this subject will be dealt with fully later; for the moment we return to Dante and his successors.

Another great name follows those of Aquinas and Dante in immediate succession, and once more an amazingly rapid transition must be recorded. Petrarch was born in 1304, seventeen years before Dante's death. Like Dante he hesitated between Latin and Italian. To some extent he used the older medium, and he believed that his best work was thus accomplished. Posterity has judged otherwise; even Petrarch could not resuscitate the fast expiring Latin, and it is by his Italian verse that he lays claim to immortality.

With his Italian works we find two things in Petrarch that differentiate him from Dante, each of them very important when gauging the transformation of Europe then proceeding. One is that whereas Dante was escaping from Latin to use the new vernacular mode of expression, Petrarch, with the vernacular mode ready at hand, but strongly swayed by the desire to employ it to advantage by copying good



models, deliberately turned back to antiquity; and this is why he is the forerunner of the Renaissance. The other is that whereas Dante, with all the newness and vitality of his language, is only giving forth the ideas of the mediæval philosophy, with Petrarch, notwithstanding his imitation of the old models, we have before us the modern man, an isolated soul struggling with conscience and contradictions, suffering pain and attaining joy, analyzing the working of his mind, preoccupied with love and life. With Petrarch's contemporary, Boccaccio, who was deeply versed in Greek as well as in Latin, this modernism becomes full-fledged with the *Decameron*.

Another friend of Petrarch, Nicola di Rienzi, will carry us back to more immediate views of the progress of the Church. He was born at Rome in the year 1313, four years after the removal of the Papacy to Avignon, and as a young man not only took to the new literary studies but entered politics. He headed a Guelph deputation of citizens to pray Clement VI to leave Avignon for Rome. The Pope declined, but for a while supported Rienzi, who, thus strengthened, rapidly attained supreme power in the city. With the help of the democratic party he was proclaimed Tribune and then Dictator of a Holy Roman Republic. Like his friend Petrarch, — crowned Poet Laureate on the Capitoline Hill, — he looked to antiquity for his models, and his vaulting ambition dreamed of a new Roman state that should embrace the whole Italian peninsula. He assembled two hundred Italian deputies at the Lateran in August, 1347, and soon



afterwards inflicted a signal defeat on the Roman nobles. These successes ruined him. He was not great enough in mind or in character to support prosperity. He became insolent and proved empty. His friends turned against him; and after vicissitudes that do not concern us, he was massacred by the Roman mob in the year 1354.

The struggle at Rome, the possible creation of a democratic state, served to show how far the Papacy had dropped since Boniface had voiced its claims. Nor was this the only symptom of religious change. From 1347 to 1350 Europe was ravaged by a pestilence, apparently bubonic plague. The loss of life, and the nervous impression, were very great. Boccaccio gives us a glimpse of such things in his *Decameron*; Froissart declares that one third of the population of France was swept away, while other chroniclers go so far as to assert that ninety per cent perished; in England it is well established that about one half of the benefices of the Church became vacant, which points to a great mortality in the ranks of the clergy. Whatever the precise facts, the shock was great, and its results striking, especially in economic, social, and religious adjustments. A wave of mystical fanaticism immediately followed. In the Low Countries especially, fraternities arose, of which the most extreme pursued humility, repentance, and mortification in an extreme form. Processions were formed of men wearing red crosses in their hats, chanting lugubrious litanies, stripped to the waist, and plying whips on one another's shoulders.



In England, whose monarchs were plunged in their century-long struggle against France, the removal of the Papacy to Avignon tended to break the ancient connection. The Pope now appeared to be a Frenchman, an enemy, and Parliament passed various statutes, notably that of *Præmunire* in 1353, reducing Papal authority in the matter of canon law and of presentation to benefices. Meanwhile a new religiosity was stirring England. John Ball preached socialism to the labourers, and propounded the revolutionary query, — using a modern paraphrase: When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then a gentleman? At that same moment John Wycliffe was pursuing his studies at Oxford.

Wycliffe (1320–1383) was a theologian, a follower of that great Ghibelline doctor, Marsiglio of Padua. He belonged to the same school of thought that had witnessed the fall of Boniface with equanimity, holding that the Church had no right to intervene in secular matters, but only where morals and dogma were at stake. Wycliffe's opinions grew bolder, responding to the general movement of the times, and from 1377 to the date of his death, 1383, he was the storm centre of religion in England. He became a reformer in doctrine, advancing an unorthodox view in the matter of transubstantiation; he declared that Papal indulgences were futile; he pronounced the Bible all-sufficient. A Papal bull was issued, and the bishops arraigned him. Wycliffe appeared, and under the pressure of the London mob, the bishops dared not condemn him. He issued numerous tracts and ser-



mons; and finally, in 1380, started to translate the Bible into English.

And here we reach the great point. The birth and rapid rise of the new languages was marked by the same phenomenon, a desire to read the Scriptures, to get from the formal and mysterious Latin of the priest to the real words of those whom God had inspired. With Provençal, French, German, and English, after making allowance for Innocent's extermination of the Albigenses and for the different stages of the independent development of these languages, the process is very similar. As early as the close of the twelfth century Waldo, a Lyonnese merchant from whom the Waldensians took their name, had caused portions of the Scriptures and Fathers to be translated. The Waldensians arose, not differing much from Rome in dogma, but in practice reverting back strongly in many details to the customs of the primitive Church.

It was at them, as well as at the Albigenses and the Cathari, that Innocent III had struck. Heresy had always been a capital offence, for Constantine and Justinian had in this respect continued the tradition of their pagan predecessors; so that Innocent, when he sent a special commission to the south of France to extirpate heresy, was merely amplifying methods previously used. In 1248 Innocent IV created a permanent tribunal of inquisition of which the operations were placed in charge of the recently established Order of St. Dominic. In Spain a similar body was already in existence for dealing with non-converted



Moors. In England, though no inquisition was established, a similar outburst of heresy to that which marked the close of the fourteenth century in many parts of France, led to the persecution of the Wycliffites or Lollards, and to the passing of the famous Act, *De Hæretico Comburendo*, in 1401.

The Popes continued at Avignon from 1309 through the fourteenth century. They were mostly Frenchmen, subservient to the king of France, careless of all save leading their lives in pomp, luxury, and indulgence. For a while Avignon was a centre of culture, but this one redeeming feature soon passed. Petrarch, the spoiled favourite of the Papal Court, eventually turned from it with loathing. No incident, save that already recorded in connection with the name of Rienzi, need detain us until the year 1378; then a development even worse than the captivity of Avignon ensued, for rival Popes were elected at Avignon and Rome, and by this schism the Papacy became weaker than before.

The schism lasted until 1417, and meanwhile the situation of the Church became worse. The tendency towards dislocation grew greater and greater. Could the Roman City of God continue to exist in the new Europe? Could the old ideas and the new be combined? But Romanism alone meant unity based on the tradition of all the ages, it meant a system, a machine, and all the enthusiasm and driving power that the large and efficient machine inevitably commands. And it was natural enough that in all parts of Europe the vast majority of clerics should feel that the great



institution they represented was sinking for one reason chiefly, the lack of the great central force and prestige which Rome as a capital could give. Heresy was gaining ground. The Lollards were increasing in England; so were the Waldensians in France, in spite of every persecution. The universities were losing much of their ecclesiastical rigorism. And now, in 1408, John Hus, a professor at the University of Prag and an admirer of Wycliffe, began to preach loudly against clerical abuses. It was time something were done, and so, in 1409, a Council of the Church was brought together at Pisa.

The Council of Pisa was not able to formulate an adequate remedy. It found nothing better to do than to call on the Popes of Avignon and of Rome to abdicate, and, without awaiting their action, it elected a new Pope, Alexander V. Unfortunately neither the French nor the Italian Pope could bring himself to the point of committing theocratical harikari, so in the result the Church had merely attained pontifical trinity without achieving hierarchical unity.

The first important acts of Alexander V were to condemn Wycliffe's writings to be burned as heretical, and to support the Archbishop of Prag in an inquisition into the teaching of Hus, now Rector of his University. Hus waxed bolder. The Archbishop excommunicated him. Serious riots broke out; and, in 1411, an interdict was laid on the city. Eventually Hus had to leave Prag, though he commanded, both within it and without, the allegiance of a large and influential body of supporters. The Church chose this



moment for a new and more successful effort to close her ranks.

John XXIII, successor of Alexander V, summoned another council; it met at Constance (1414-1418), where over thirty cardinals, two hundred bishops, and eighty thousand visitors witnessed what was perhaps the greatest assembly in the records of the Church between Nicæa in 325 and the Vatican in 1870.

We may note first that its conditions were international, and that the Italian bishops were not able to dominate it with their numbers, as the council adopted the plan of four votes, one for each nation: Italian, French, English, German. One other preliminary deserves more than passing notice: on the motion of Gerson, the learned chancellor of the University of Paris, the council proclaimed its superiority over the Pope, a decision that deserves some consideration.

In one sense history could justify the declaration moved by Gerson; in another it could not. The first Œcumenic Council, that of Nicæa, had been summoned by the authority of the Emperor, and the bishop of Rome had held no special authority, no special rank. With subsequent councils, and as the centuries slipped by, the Popes had, however, slowly acquired a special position. They had claimed a superiority over the councils; they had presided over some councils, and had convened others. Councils had delegated special powers to the Popes, while they had always displayed a tendency to usurp an authority which had been very real during the period that passed



between Gregory VII and Boniface VIII. Yet many theologians considered, especially since the supine epoch of Avignon, that the supreme authority of the Church did and should by right reside in the council. The early history of the Church supported this view, and recent history, together with the existing situation, lent it point.

With many the practical argument weighed more than the theological. Of the three immediate objects of the council, one was to get rid of the schism, and the favoured plan for effecting this was to remove all three Popes, after which a new and undisputed one could be elected. To effect this, it was clear that the council must dominate the Popes in possession, and in fact this proved a difficult matter. It was only after many incidents and negotiations that the road was ultimately cleared for a sole Pope, Martin V.

There were two other chief matters, closely related, that the Council of Constance was concerned with, heresy and reform. The great mass of intelligent and reasonable churchmen, especially the French and Germans, were anxious to take up these matters together. They wanted unity, that is conformity; but they recognised the presence of grave abuses which they were anxious to remedy. As it happened, they were not able to take up the two questions together; that of heresy was inevitably pushed to the front by the urgency of the situation created by Hus in Bohemia. The action of Alexander V was confirmed by the condemnation of the positions taken



by Wycliffe in the matter of transubstantiation, confession, and absolution. This accomplished, John Hus was summoned before the council.

In the sense in which this book is written it will not do to attempt to differentiate the case of John Hus from that of the other victims of Roman intolerance. From the Jews and Christians roasted by pagan Rome to illuminate the gardens of Nero, to the reformers and Protestants roasted or assassinated by Christian Rome to maintain a hierarchy and discipline founded on dogma, the difference is not great. The phenomenon is essentially the same. The mode of thought that works at the back of the Latin tongue is exclusive, inelastic, uniform, autocratic. Law, order, dominion, conformity, these are the square bounds within which humanity must be parked. Rome may be first pagan, then Christian, yet her instincts are still the same. In the case of John Hus there is a long story of negotiation, of safe conducts, of double-dealing, of exciting debates and incidents. And at last, after many vicissitudes that cannot be related, he was seized, tried, condemned, led to the stake, and burned for heresy. The council had triumphantly sealed in treachery, blood and flames the pact of Christian unity.

This occurred in July, 1415; and it was followed by the outbreak of the terrible Hussite war that tore Bohemia and the neighbouring countries for nearly twenty years. The council, meanwhile, was addressing itself to other questions, and to one of them, the last we need deal with, most unsuccessfully. Reform



was demanded by the best section of the Church, was resisted by that other section that could see nothing more important than the enjoyment of benefices and the perpetuation of abuses. The struggle between these two parties was sharp and protracted. The election of Martin was forced on before the question of reform had been disposed of, and finally the better party had to be content with a condition that the Pope should inaugurate reforms after his election. This was really a renunciation of the first position of the council that its authority was superior to that of the Pope; it might be superior in theory, it could not be in practice, the whole current of history was setting the other way.

And now the Papacy had a head once more, and Rome was again the centre of the Christian world; at this very moment the eastern rival, after resisting for so long, was on the point of expiring before a new wave of Mohammedan conquest. In 1453, only a few years after the restoration of the Papacy, Constantinople fell to the Turks, an event of much consequence to western Europe. It had two great results, and might have had a third. It brought the threat of Mohammedan conquest to Europe once more, through the valley of the Danube towards Germany, along the Adriatic coasts towards Italy. It sent the learning and culture of the East to strengthen the rising intellectualism of Europe. It gave to the Papacy a unique opportunity, which it failed to take, for uniting Christendom east and west, Latin, Greek,



and Teutonic. Conversely stated, the three outstanding aspects of the period that follows are these: the great political shock marked by the formation of the vast Hapsburg Spanish Empire of Charles V; the Renaissance; the dilatory and incapable policy of the Popes. Of these three let us first glance at the Renaissance.

The Renaissance has a superficial aspect, easy to seize, and another, not so easy, that lies below the surface. It is like the youth who suddenly emerges from a period of depression and gloom, finds himself, walks erect and joyous, his face aglow with colour and vitality. So with the outward aspect of the Renaissance, with its cult of beauty, its prodigal outpouring of imagination in painting, in sculpture, in poetry. But all this exuberance proceeded from an inward cause more difficult to realize, and more important. Perhaps it may be best understood if we turn back for a moment to Petrarch and to Rienzi.

When relating the fall of paganism after the conversion of Constantine, it was said that: "Christianity had triumphed through the revolt of the individual conscience; it was now to attempt the dangerous task of creating a collective one." Hildebrand, Innocent, Boniface, had struggled hard to impose this gradually evolved system of a collective conscience on Europe in the form of a great semi-feudal theocracy. In that supreme effort they had failed, yet the underlying idea that the individual's relation to conscience was not a personal matter, but one regulated by the system of the Church remained, for there was in fact



nothing to substitute for it. Conscience could only be what the canon law, the priest, and the confessional declared it to be. The effort of the Renaissance was the regaining of self-consciousness, of personal conscience; and it is this that may, in a rough sort of manner, be connected back with Rienzi and with Petrarch.

Rienzi's scheme for a new Roman state, of which the traditions should be sought in antiquity and the Republic, not in mediævalism and the Church, was eagerly caught up and eloquently echoed by Petrarch. His excited imagination evoked a golden age and a new humanity. And as Guelphs, both the Tribune and the poet associated this with the driving-out of the Germans from Italy, and the defeat of feudalism. The priest and the baron were both to make way for the emancipated citizen.<sup>1</sup> The Church and the Empire would no longer guide his footsteps, but a tradition older and more independent.

Notwithstanding the momentary revival of Imperial and Papal prestige at the Council of Constance, these ideas flowed on with ever increasing strength from Petrarch's time. And they were reinforced by others closely akin. The same independence which Rienzi manifested in the political field, asserted itself in that of pure conscience. Abélard had declared for the criticism of those sacred texts on which Rome

<sup>1</sup> Aquinas had almost preached this doctrine a century earlier: "Ab uno omnes originem habemus. Non legitur Deus fecisse unum hominem argenteum ex quo nobiles, unum luteum ex quo ignobiles." Aquinas, quot. by Ozanam, *Op. Col.* Vol. VI, p. 303.



based her power. Wycliffe, Hus, had protested against the use of absolution as an instrument of discipline and authority and not for the real healing of torn conscience. And all this meant introspection, self-consciousness.

At the same moment, inextricably bound up with it, came the new learning, a movement which can be traced back to almost any point, to the year 1000, to Charlemagne, or even to Gregory I, if need be. To take it in a reasonable sense, however, we can think of it as deriving chiefly from the birth of the new European languages. From the time of Petrarch, Italy delves rapidly into the buried intellectual treasures of Rome and Greece to find food for the extraordinary activity that possesses her, an activity in large part due to economic influences too remotely connected with the present subject to be dwelt on. It was at this point that the exodus from captured Constantinople made itself specially felt. The advent of many Greek scholars and many Greek manuscripts at such a moment was a great and decisive factor in the movement.

The man of the Renaissance is not easy to describe, because the awakening of conscience and stimulation of the intellect then proceeding could not, in the nature of things, produce such even results as had the growth of mediævalism. That had been centripetal, while the new movement was of necessity centrifugal. The man of the Renaissance is always creative and self-conscious, but his effort ranges over every possibility of good or evil. In the field of religion his new-found



consciousness turns him from dogma to piety, and by the middle of the fifteenth century the monk à Kempis has produced his *Imitation of Christ*, of which over eighty editions were printed between 1470 and 1500. The prodigious success of this book at this moment, appealing as it did to minds inclined towards asceticism and mystical piety, but not towards formal theology or theocratic organization, is one of the most significant signs of the times.

In another direction the man of the Renaissance tends to pure rationalism. High dignitaries of the Church satirize it unmercifully. Papal secretaries detect with amused acumen the forgeries of their predecessors, and while warning their masters of the fraudulent basis of their power, devote themselves with sceptical zeal to its maintenance. Learning, which had formerly been the monopoly of ecclesiastically controlled universities, now slips into lay hands, and the barrier between sacred and profane, between science and wit, breaks down. The Greek example turns men more and more to vitalize literature by a proportioned sense of the veracious and the beautiful. Theological discussion and the observation of life are lightly blended by the satire of Erasmus in one of the most popular books of the day.

Yet all this is far from exhausting all that might be said about the man of the Renaissance. One of the most accessible of ancient authors was Seneca, the favourite of Erasmus, and from him could be drawn to the full the counsels of introspection, meditation, and conscience of the Stoic philosophy.



Conscience with many was translated into terms of intellectual labour, the constant, and critical, and æsthetic examination of natural phenomena, the human form, the celestial movements, the problems of physics. From this came a wonderful host of Italians, with pupils and followers in western Europe, craftsmen, artists, engineers, soldiers, statesmen, all scientific in a way hitherto unknown, and more than scientific because burning with the fire of the new birth of Europe. Some remained religious, but for the most part the intellectual overcame the emotional in them, and after a short burst of glorious activity their effort became purely utilitarian, and thence rapidly fell to futility. Their names are too familiar to require enumeration, but what needs to be recalled is that the same great push is behind the scientific statesmen and soldiers like Pescara, Macchiavelli, Cæsar Borgia, or Parma, as behind the great artists and technicians, Leonardo, Cellini, or Michael Angelo.

The Renaissance may be said to have penetrated within Rome, even within the ranks of her clergy, as early as the days of Rienzi. It took possession of the Papal throne in 1447 on the accession of Nicholas V. From that date to 1492, the year Columbus discovered America and Borgia was elected Pope, the affairs of the Papacy can be briefly summarized. Blind to the dangers of the course they had set, the Popes displayed intellectual instead of religious faith, and religious instead of intellectual scepticism. They quickly made of Rome the capital of the Renaissance, and, at the head of the world's movement



as of the world's religion, they never realized that they were rapidly nearing the edge of a formidable chasm. In an atmosphere of sordid financial and political intrigue, they thought little of right conduct and everything of glorifying the capital of Christendom in letters, architecture, and art. Among these Renaissance Popes the culminating figure was that of Roderigo Borgia, who after some hard bargaining with the cardinals assumed the Papal tiara in 1492 as Alexander VI.

The pontificate of Alexander was marked by the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII of France and by his momentary alliance with the Pope. The French ambitions had the two extremities of the peninsula, Milan and Naples, in view; and the Pope's son Cæsar, as gonfalonier of the Church, set to building up a great state in central Italy. He came nearer success than did Charles VIII. Drastic in method, he supported statecraft with treachery, generalship with assassination, courageous and large policies with poison. Excelling in logic he rejected conscience wholly, where most men rejected all but heterogeneous and inconvenient shreds of conscience. For a space he triumphed by dint of resourcefulness, of courage and intellect, ruthlessly applied. While Cæsar astonished even Italy by his methods, and appeared to Macchiavelli to gather up all the qualities of the practically efficient prince, his father completed the picture in other aspects. Amid the fast-growing splendour and opulence of Rome, he recalled by his life and example some of his predecessors in the title



of Pontifex Maximus whose memory was most deeply execrated. Surrounded by troops of courtesans he made the Vatican the scene of orgies that would have done credit to the imagination of Caligula, Commodus, or Heliogabalus. He tore from the Church her last veil of religiosity, and exposed her to Europe naked and foul, a by-word and a reproach.

In 1503 the Borgia régime closed. Julius II reigned ten years, and was followed by Leo X, the Pope of the Reformation. Julius was an improvement on Alexander, and yet of the same general type. His ambitions were secular, and he took the field at the head of the Papal armies to join in the scramble for territorial conquest when he was not developing the splendours and fastuousness of his capital. He laid the foundations of the new St. Peter's, and inaugurated the great financial campaigns that were to make of it the most gorgeous monument of the Christian faith, and the starting-point of Luther's revolt.

Of finance, and various other diseases of the Church not yet touched on, there will be much to say in the next chapter. Let us close this one by a few words concerning certain political developments that occurred in western Europe during the first quarter of the momentous sixteenth century. The House of Hapsburg was now in possession of the imperial throne, which it was to retain almost uninterruptedly until 1806. By marrying the heiress of Burgundy, Maximilian of Hapsburg acquired that great inheritance; this was further augmented by the marriage of his son to the heiress of Castile and Aragon. Charles,



issue of that marriage, who became Emperor in 1519 and master of the newly discovered treasures of Mexico and Peru, was to hold the greatest power seen in Europe between Charlemagne and Napoleon. On either hand of the vast dominions of Charles lay hostile forces. France, with ambitions of her own in Italy and towards the Rhine, struggled hard not to be throttled by the huge Hapsburg coil wound about her. The Turks, with sudden bursts of military energy, threatened the heart of Germany itself. In 1526 they defeated the Hungarians in the plains of Mohacs, and three years later the Sultan Suleiman laid siege to Vienna. But the death of Louis, king of Hungary, at Mohacs, had thrown his kingdom into the hands of Ferdinand of Hapsburg, and that house, though severely pressed for a century and a half, was destined eventually to drive the Turks into the Balkans again. Long before 1526, however, the Reformation had broken out, and we must now turn back and trace its course.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE REFORMATION

MARTIN LUTHER was born at Eisenach in 1483, and took his degree of Master of Arts at the University of Erfurt in 1505; he then turned to the study of theology and to the practice of religion. He was by nature devout, he studied and meditated profoundly, and as a young priest laid the foundations of what was later to be his chief position, recalling that of St. Paul, that the remission of sins proceeded from the grace of Jesus Christ. As a teacher at the University of Wittenberg the vigour and freshness of Luther's expositions of doctrine gained him a wide reputation. The newly invented printing-press scattered his sermons throughout Germany, France, and England; they were widely understood as a protest against the existing discipline of the Church. For the Church had come to believe in something very far removed indeed from the remission of sins by grace.

The remission of sins had, in fact, become the financial basis of a highly organized financial machine that was religious in little else than its ancient name—the Church. And it was an epoch in which the increasing complexity of civilization and the competition in luxury and artistic splendour made money hard to get. If Rome was to support the Pope and the Curia, if she was to be the capital of the Renaissance,



to erect its most dazzling monuments, to deck herself with its most splendid pictures and sculptures, vast sums of money must be raised. And these vast sums were accordingly extracted from a devout and obedient public, by converting the ethical thunders of Paul and of Augustine, of Hildebrand and of Innocent, into the motive power of a piece of fiscal machinery.

Step by step the Curia had set a price on every sin and crime known to man. If sin had been committed it could also be absolved, by paying commensurate fees. For the convenience both of sinners and of collectors, a tariff of sin was codified and printed at Rome in 1471,<sup>1</sup> and its usefulness, if not its popularity, led to numerous editions following. From that of 1520, printed in Paris, we can estimate the current rates of sin remission by quoting a few selected items from the tariff, prefacing this much, that the gros was one tenth of a ducat, that it would pay for one day's keep of a man and horse, and that each gros has to be multiplied by five, the number of departments of the Curia through the hands of which the repentant sinner would have to pass before he obtained his clean bill of spiritual health.

Every sin was on the tariff save heresy alone, and among the relatively cheap ones we may note: —

Absolution for him who has carnal connection with his mother, sister, or other kinswoman . . . . .	5gr.
For him who deflowers a virgin . . . . .	6gr.
For the killing of a layman by a layman . . . . .	5gr.

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<sup>1</sup> The facts given here are in part controversial; Woker and Döllinger are the authorities followed.



From among the more expensive luxuries of a too exuberant life may be noted: —

Annulling or putting off a vow of pilgrimage to the Holy  
Sepulchre and other holy places. . . . . 18gr.

And among the indulgences: —

A general dispensation for life. . . . . 25gr.

Dispensations for marriage within the prohibited degrees, — the most expensive luxury of all, and usually indulged in by monarchs only, — were rated at from three hundred to six hundred ducats, according to circumstances.

This system was marvellously fruitful; for it stopped at nothing, and humanity was still enthralled, ignorant and abject. A single monk returned to Rome from an indulgence vending tour with 27,000 ducats. The Curia was prepared to sell anything, for it even entered the vilest traffic open to men by levying 20,000 ducats a year from the busy prostitutes of Rome. The Curia itself became a source of profit, for its appointments were benefices; Leo X, by increasing the staff of scribes from 80 to 2150 and selling the appointments, raked in at one swoop 900,000 florins in gold.

The Papal revenue was not exclusively derived from these sources. There were others, furnishing much matter for friction with the clergy of distant parts of Europe and their sovereigns, but on the whole of less importance for tracing the evolution of the Church.

This, then, was what the organization of a collective conscience had come to, a systematized trading



on human turpitude, superstition and fear, in the name of an ethical code. Nor was this the only point at which the Church lay open to attack. The Roman system carried with it a corollary, for sin condoned was sin directly stimulated, and the clergy had become deeply tainted from the very instrument it had been made to wield. St. Francis and his early followers were doubtless saints, but the Franciscan friars of the period we have now reached were for the most part worldly enough. The cleric was the privileged possessor of benefices and means of revenue palpably based on fraud and therefore demoralizing. The life led by a great part of the clergy, more especially in the Latin parts of Europe, was a flagrant disgrace. The heroes of Boccaccio's most scandalous adventures were generally monks. Popes gave the example of breaking openly every law of morals and of decency. And yet the confessional penitential system was never more rigidly enforced, for reasons already dealt with. The self-respecting burgher of France and Germany, already touched by the new learning and some germs of free thought, supported with suppressed dislike the immixtion of the priest or monk in his household. His wife, his daughter, were trained to place their intelligence and their emotions under the dictation of an individual marked by a tonsure and a robe who was only too often a glutton, a sot, and a sexual pervert. Monasteries and convents were often enough the notorious homes of sloth, indulgence, and abominable offences, all carefully protected, even fostered, by the Curia of Rome.



These were the conditions and signs of the times when in the year 1516 the Dominican friar Tetzel started on a tour of Germany to sell a large stock of indulgences of which the proceeds were intended for the building fund of the new St. Peter's, which Leo X was actively pushing. For a while Tetzel drove a prosperous trade, but finally this shameless traffic led to an outburst of long pent-up indignation. In October, 1517, Luther nailed on the door of the church of Wittenberg the famous ninety-five theses wherein he denied the right of the Pope to remit sins, and with this act it may be said that the Lutheran Reformation began.

At the moment when Luther nailed the flag of revolt to the church door of Wittenberg, Europe was ripe for reform. In a very clear sense since the time of Boniface VIII, that is for two centuries, and with increasing force, the best part of the Church had demanded a change. An effort had been made in that direction at the Council of Constance under the lead of Gerson. At the Council of Basle, a few years later, a great struggle had taken place between the reforming party and the Pope, which almost disrupted the Church once more, but eventually produced no lasting result. And now the act of Luther brought matters to a head, for he immediately won support even in Italy or Spain, even among members of the College of Cardinals; he found imitators like Zwingli at Zürich or Melancthon; and where opposition was offered it was at first of a feeble character.

One of the reasons for this was that in its essentials



the reformation of Luther was not doctrinal; it was aimed less at the Creed than at the Curia. Yet as it developed over the following half-century, disputation of necessity arose, and of necessity became theological; while the anti-Lutherans, fighting on dogmatic ground, were conversely influenced towards higher standards of conduct. So that gradually the reformers became schismatic in dogma, while the orthodox became reformers in conduct, and at the end of the great struggle it was found that both Protestants and Catholics had reformed, and that what now divided them was no longer the immediate cause of the quarrel, but questions of dogma and the supremacy of the Pope. These divergencies of dogma will be left on one side for the moment, while we trace the events that marked the early stages of the conflict.

Luther was promptly attacked and, at the Diet of Worms (1521), defended himself with impressive energy. The young Emperor Charles V took an attitude far from uncompromisingly hostile: Luther through the press rained blows on his opponents, and among these he reckoned reformers like Zwingli, or men inclined for reform like Erasmus, whose views happened to differ from his. He continued issuing tracts and theses. He wrote hymns. He translated the Bible from the Greek into the German. His vigour in all these things, as a disputant, as a wielder of the rough but deep and sincere German tongue, accomplished a great work of propaganda. The masses of Germany, with here and there a great nobleman, were swept by a tidal wave of religious emotionalism.



In their extravagant zeal they pushed reform to a point where even Luther was left behind. Curious new doctrines arose, Anabaptism perhaps the most extreme. Popular revolt fast reached the peasants, and with them tended towards an agrarian war; for the effort became largely social and for freedom from feudal burdens. In a manifesto which they issued in August, 1525, they demanded: the right to elect their own clergy; the apportionment of tithes for the support of the poor; the abolition of serfdom; and the suppression of a number of feudal and clerical burdens.

The Peasants' Revolt failed, ferociously repressed by Ferdinand of Hapsburg and the German aristocracy; and this appeared for the moment to be a considerable setback for the Lutheran cause. But it was more than counterbalanced before many months had elapsed. In 1526 a Protestant league was formed by several of the German states including Saxony, Hesse, and Brandenburg, while in the following year it appeared for a moment as though Rome herself would be overwhelmed.

The Popes had long been trimming between France and the Hapsburgs. With the accession of Francis I, in 1515, the struggle for dominion in Italy entered a violent phase. On the field of Pavia, in 1525, Francis was defeated and captured, and Charles appeared to triumph. But Francis broke his prison and his oaths, renewed the struggle, drew into it Italian powers fearful of the Hapsburg ascendancy, — Sforza, Venice and Pope Clement VI. Charles had been turning his ef-



forts since Pavia to the suppression of the Lutheran heresy in Germany, and the Pope's attack filled him with anger. He collected a great German army, placed it under the orders of Bourbon, and sent it into Italy. That army, as Charles knew, was full of Lutherans, and they advanced against Rome in an ugly mood. Whereas the Goths of Alaric regarded the cross and the priest with superstitious awe, the reiters of Bourbon viewed the sacred city of Christendom, according to Luther, as the whore of Babylon. They carried silken nooses for the cardinals, and a golden one to hang the Pope; and when Bourbon stormed the walls at their head and fell, they thoroughly avenged his death. The terrible sack of Rome by the Germans, in May, 1527, made a tremendous impression on Europe. The tales of slaughter and of sacrilege, of the quest for treasure, of torture, of destruction, of patrician ladies turned into the drabs of a German camp, thrilled humanity, and seemed to presage the overthrow of the Papacy. The elements of schism were numerous in France and England, and all seemed to depend on the decision of the Emperor Charles. He chose to stay his hand, however. He granted peace to the Pope and to France, and by his constancy to the old established order of Europe afforded the Papacy breathing time, gave to the Church an opportunity to reconsider its position, left for the counter-reformation a solid nucleus around which to build up its forces.

The reader has now before him the starting-point that should enable him to follow understandingly



the history of the great period of religious wars that lasted until 1648; for all the rest is the logical consequence of what we have seen. It is not the object of this book to fill in details; more than this, its method demands the elimination of every detail that does not bear directly on the evolution of large movements or ideas. And we have now come to a moment when it would seem that the reader can grasp the rest of the Reformation movement to best advantage in a form condensed under the following heads: the counter-reformation; Germany; France; England; Spain.

We will therefore first consider the counter-reformation, neglecting the movement of reformation in northwestern Europe for the present. That the Roman Church should set its house in order so as to resist its enemies was shown to be necessary and urgent by the sack of Rome; the movement actually began seven years later with the election to the Papacy of Paul III, Farnese. Inclined to better things, strong in character, and alive to the dangers of the situation, he set to work to surmount them. He gave the cardinal's hat to men of a new type, Erasmus, Reginald Pole, Contarini. The latter was sent to Ratisbon to confer with Melanchthon, with a view to reaching a basis of settlement. Both were earnest and conciliatory, Contarini, indeed, going so far as to accept the Lutheran doctrine of justification by grace; but adverse influences were at work, and the reconciliation could not be effected. One party, indeed, with Pole among its leaders, was prepared to



follow Contarini; and the Lutheran doctrine of justification acquired a great though transitory vogue in Italy. But another party prevailed, that of the sombre Caraffa, later to be Paul IV.

Caraffa pointed to the evident fact that the policy of conciliation was a confession of weakness, and that its first result was that the leaders of the Italian clergy were already fast drifting towards Wittenberg and carrying Rome along with them. This movement must clearly be stopped, and Caraffa suggested the means, which was to reorganize the Inquisition on the Spanish model, and with that powerful engine to impose conformity.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, in 1542, the Holy Office of the Inquisition was set up in Rome, under the direction of the Pope and a committee of cardinals. It proceeded to investigate those very floating opinions of the day that were setting men so fast adrift towards a reformed faith. To such opinions as appeared mistaken it promptly applied the old remedy of Nero and of Justinian for non-conformity, that is heresy. Burning at the stake was decided on as the most suitable punishment, not, however, without previous investigations; for it is related that at Utrecht boiling was thought fitter, and was carried out, until the bishop

<sup>1</sup> The Inquisition of the thirteenth century had about completed its work by the end of the fourteenth, and from that time fell into disuse. In Spain, however, the peculiar conditions of the struggle with the Moors had resulted in the revival of an institution of which the significance was local and the power used mainly for the strengthening of the new Spanish monarchy.



of that place found himself unable, even in a holy cause, to endure that indescribable spectacle. Here, then, was an agency at work that was to accomplish much. Within thirty years of its institution Italy was purged of Protestantism, and Paolo Flaminio's book in defence of the doctrine of justification, of which sixty thousand copies had been printed, had entirely disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

But Caraffa did even more, he discovered Ignatius Loyola and started him on his mission. This Basque fanatic, ascetic, man of genius, swept in at one glance the critical situation of the Church in regard to the march of civilization. He was given the opportunity to improve it, and used it to tremendous effect. He founded the Society of Jesus, a militia of the Papacy sworn to restore its authority. The discipline of the Society was absolute, and was elaborately framed on a system of spying and delation. The Jesuit Fathers were prepared to undertake any and every act that might profit Rome. If the Roman case required popular exposition, they trained a school of theologians, unmatched for oratorical power, to effect this. If a monarch or minister pursued a hostile policy, they pointed the dagger or pistol that brought him to earth. They applied the utmost energy and the craftiest methods to control education and to stamp Rome indelibly on the infant mind of whole populations. They slipped into the confessional of sovereigns, and whispered policies that shaped the destiny of nations. They developed casuistry and probabilism so as to be able conscientiously to de-



clare that black was white or white black. And this supreme achievement of inverted conscience became an even more effective weapon of theocratic warfare when multiplied by the remarkable numbers and quality of the recruits that were drawn to the ranks of this stalwart legion of the Church.

Loyola's Order, informally started in 1534, received Papal support from 1539, and numbered one thousand members in 1556; by 1590 it had become the driving-wheel of the Roman Church. Before that date, however, we have two other matters to note, the Council of Trent, and the succession of the Popes.

Ever since the schism that marked the end of the Avignon period there had been a strong push towards holding councils. Those of Pisa, Constance, and Basle have been noticed; others less momentous had followed. The outbreak of the Reformation had stimulated this tendency anew. At first the reformers were eager for a new assembly like that of Constance or Basle, in which they hoped to carry the programme of reform which had been so prominent in previous councils. Moderate Catholics, too, saw in this course one conformable with all the traditions of the Church, and hoped it might effect a reconciliation. The conference of Contarini and Melancthon might indeed be held to be a step in just this direction; and Paul III, leaning in this matter towards the moderates, called the Council of Trent together in 1545.

The council was presided over by Papal legates, who kept a close control over its proceedings. The Protestants were not represented. The new Catho-



lic party, Caraffa, the Jesuits, wielded great influence; while bribery was not neglected as a means of securing conformity. And from the first it was clear that the council would not heal the breach in the Church, but would rather direct its energy to strengthening the Roman Pontiff.

The proceedings of the Council of Trent lasted, on and off, for nearly twenty years, from 1545 to 1564, and we may now view them chronologically. In 1546 the council voted that tradition, the unwritten word, should be held equivalent to Scripture; so that, when two hundred years later Pius IX declared, "*la tradizione son io*," he was proving that the Tridentine decree had really vested all the authority of tradition in the Pope, abandoning the Bible to the Protestants. It was the preamble of the logical conclusion arrived at by the last œcumenic council in 1870.

One year later the council condemned the Lutheran doctrine of justification; but having embarked on dogmatic discussion found the course full of reefs, charted and uncharted. Difficulties increased. The Emperor was displeased at some of the council's decisions, and before the end of the year its proceedings were adjourned *sine die*. Three years later, Paul III died, and his successor, Julius III, reopened the council, its sessions on this occasion lasting but a few months. But with the accession of Caraffa to the Papacy as Paul IV, in 1555, the policy of violent repression triumphed. The pagan and debauched Catholicism of Borgia, the moderate and humanistic Catholicism of Erasmus, had both been completely



supplanted by the intolerant policies and magnificent discipline of the Jesuits, redoubtable champions, as Acton described them, of an austere immorality.

Paul IV concentrated his efforts on developing the Inquisition. His successor, Pius IV, once more summoned the council together, with no idea now of healing the breach of the Church, but merely of increasing its fighting power. It assembled in May, 1562, and its decrees were solemnly approved by the Pope in January, 1564. Discipline and organization were the chief subject of these decrees. The bishops, the monastic orders, were reduced to a closer supervision; the education of the priesthood was regulated; various doctrinal positions were defined; and the council published an index of prohibited books. This last matter deserves special attention.

We have already seen how the growth of the new languages, together with the economic and intellectual shock with the East, had caused a great movement, culminating in the new learning of the Renaissance. The quest and the reproduction of manuscripts was one of the obsessions of the fifteenth century, and out of this arose, midway through it, the printing-press. The current of literature grew, and was further increased by the religious controversy, so that by the time of the Reformation the press had become a fundamental factor in European civilization.

But the press was an agent of thought, and thought tended more and more towards complexity, originality, divergence, criticism, enquiry, observation of fact. And from the early moment when the newborn



tongues instinctively sought to learn the mysteries of religion by drawing the Scriptures out of their Latin or Greek vestment, they had advanced far in religious, historical and imaginative literature. Every day they progressed further, every day the religious conflict produced bolder opinions, and the Church soon discovered that the press was its enemy.

Bishops, universities, took it on themselves to condemn books, to forbid them, to have them publicly burned. Lists of such books were published. Caraffa drew up the first Roman Index, and finally the Tridentine Index was prepared. From that day to this the Roman Church has waged relentless war against the press, a matter that will be presently dealt with from its present-day aspect.

Armed with the Inquisition, the Jesuits, and the decrees of the Council of Trent, Pius V, Gregory XIII, and Sixtus V (1566-1590) wrought the Church into a fighting machine and delivered a tremendous attack on Protestantism. But it was an attack for the sake of discipline and not for the sake of conscience. Rome had rejected turpitude; she had found austerity; but her fanaticism was fanaticism for Rome and not for right. It was met by a fanaticism as great, and with a better, if weaker, cause behind it. After 1590, during the last phase of this struggle, the real leadership of the Church passed to the Jesuits, and the men elected to the Papal throne were of less weight. By turning to the states of Europe, we shall be able to trace what were the efforts of Romanism to dominate Protestantism, and what came of them.



The league of Protestant princes which we saw formed in Germany proved successful, though not until after many vicissitudes. The political combinations changed more than once, and the struggle between Charles and his rebellious vassals was marked by many fluctuations; but in 1555, a great settlement was reached by the Peace of Augsburg. By this treaty Germany was divided into Catholic and Lutheran states, according to the faith professed by the princes, and each faith was exclusive of the other. As seen from the vantage-ground of the present, it was a glaring absurdity, for it was saying that a German might be driven out of Cologne for Lutheranism, and out of Leipzig for Catholicism. But in this first stage of a movement of which the full significance was not yet realized, this was not felt, being in fact largely concealed by a very important political change that went with it.

In his revolt against the Roman See, Luther had incurred a grave personal risk; he had therefore turned towards the support which princes like the electors of Saxony and of Hesse had offered him. His doctrinal position had been largely affected by this, and he rapidly developed the theory of the divine right of kings from its Hebrew or Biblical origin. The result was that in Lutheranism the supremacy of the lay sovereign was exalted; and the idea of the control of religion by the state, together with the holding of a privileged position as exclusive as that of the Roman Church, gave Lutheranism its distinctive character.

There were other features of the new German faith



that require mention, and these less distinctively Lutheran. As it spread northward a divergence appeared between Germany and the Scandinavian countries. In the latter the bishops were generally retained, in the former not. The rule of celibacy, a burning question of morals, discipline, and clerical influence, was abrogated, Luther himself setting the example. The divine service was turned from Latin into the vernacular, and in the mass the communicant was allowed to participate in both kinds.

The Peace of Augsburg marked the failure of Charles V. He could not view with equanimity the success of the Lutheran princes. "It was an intolerable hypocrisy to be the friend of Protestants where they were strong, and to burn them where they were weak."<sup>1</sup> So in the following year he abdicated, leaving the mixed inheritance of Germany to his brother Ferdinand, the Catholic inheritance of Spain, Naples, Milan, and the Burgundian provinces to his son Philip.

After Augsburg there was a momentary respite for Germany. The Emperors were inclined for compromise, especially Maximilian II (1564–1576), under whom the Catholic Church in Austria began to drop into Lutheran practices. The accession of Rudolf II, however, marked the extension to Austria of the full vigour of the Catholic reaction. Energetic measures were taken to tighten the relaxed bonds, and finally Bohemia, whose rebelliousness dated back to the days of John Hus, rose in revolt. Long-continued disorder culminated in war, and from 1618 to

<sup>1</sup> Acton, *Modern History*, p. 128.



1648 Germany was desolated by the Thirty Years' War. On one side was the Emperor and Catholicism; on the other, Lutheranism with a strong backing of northern princes, eventually supported by Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, who shared with Tilly and Wallenstein the military honours of a period of horrors. The upshot was the Peace of Westphalia, that marked the end of the wars of religion in Germany. It changed little in what had been accomplished at Augsburg; but the Catholics had gained a little ground, especially in the Hapsburg possessions, while on the other hand Calvinism had obtained recognition. And this brings us to the second great wave of the Reformation.

John Calvin, who was born in 1509, belonged therefore to the next generation after Luther. As vigorous as Loyola, though more intellectual, he conceived the idea that was to be the real foundation of Protestantism. This was of a Church in the form of a social organization of the congregation regulated by elders coöperating with the priest. On this he superimposed a burning and intolerant puritanism. Calvin was eloquent. His system contained a popular appeal that made for growth; and it spread fast through France, and into Germany and the British Isles, particularly Scotland.

In this sense, then, Calvin was ahead of his times, was pushing on the hand of history; in another he was no better than his own age. The intensity of the period is difficult to realize. Men were engrossed in questions of religion and of morality, but were still



under the cloud of the Dark Ages, a cloud faintly touched as yet with the glow of the new learning. Their conclusions were of necessity dogmatic, that is definite and harsh. They were far more intolerant and exclusive than the humanizing Roman churchmen of the sceptical, æstheticizing half-century that preceded the Reformation. An opposing opinion meant Hell, damnation, and the stake. Personal conviction carried the risk of the loss of all things, family, fortune, and life through torment. It was not an age of philosophic doubt or of human kindness. As yet toleration showed its head but faintly.

These things are well illustrated by the incident connected with the name of Servetus. This bold thinker had retraversed the centuries, and reached the position which Arius had fought for so hard at the time of the Council of Nicæa; in other words, he was unitarian in doctrine. Nothing could be more hateful to the Inquisition, or to Calvin. The unfortunate Spaniard fell into the hands of the Inquisition first; but it was Calvin who surreptitiously supplied the evidence on which that tribunal condemned him to death by slow fire. Just before his sentence was to have been carried out, Servetus escaped, and in disguise wandered into Geneva. There fate overtook him, and Calvin himself, as intolerant and as cruel as the Inquisition, sent him to the stake. The younger Socinus, who did much to promote unitarian views in north-eastern Europe, was more fortunate than Servetus.

So much, then, for Calvin. In him we have an eloquent writer, a great innovator in Church organ-



ization, and for the rest a bigot and a man of the Middle Ages. Moving from Calvin's Genevan stronghold to the west, we shall find new features of the Reformation, though nearly at every point what predominates is the influence of Calvin, dogmatic but chiefly institutional.

In France the Reformation was preceded by the concordat negotiated in 1516 between Francis I and Leo X. By this treaty the king obtained control of the choice of bishops, in return for which the Pope took annates, a year's revenue of the benefice, and further obtained from the king a renouncement for France of the position taken by the Council of Basle that the Pope was subordinate to the council.

Under Francis and his successors Calvinism made great headway in France. There were moments when it appeared as though it might reach the throne itself. In 1562, however, just as the Council of Trent was reaching its close, a great Catholic effort was made to win France back. The wars of the Huguenots followed, marked by the massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572, by the failure of the House of Valois, the rise of the House of Bourbon, and the success of its head, Henry of Navarre. In 1598 his edict of Nantes effected peace on a compromise basis that gave the Huguenots a limited amount of religious freedom, though not equal to that which the Peace of Augsburg had secured to the Lutherans.

It was in the course of the Huguenot struggle in France, and under a somewhat similar set of circumstances further north in the Low Countries, that



we come to a third great stage of the Reformation, following the revolt of Luther and the institutional work of Calvin; this was the appearance of the idea of toleration. And with toleration, it is hardly necessary to say, we reach that element of the Reformation which lies deepest, which will eventually carry it beyond the bounds of mere religious controversy, which bears in germ the thought of an age to come, an age hostile to the four-square, exclusive, Græco-Christian philosophy and that moves towards evolutionary tentative ideas.

Toleration, then, is the note of the moment when Rome was closing her ranks at Trent, and this new idea was rising almost suddenly from the obscure bed so freely and confusedly littered for half a century past by the rough-handed pioneers of the Reformation. In France it was fostered by legal schools and a scholarship already well developed. In political, religious, juristic thought, toleration makes its appeal as more reasonable, more just, more statesmanlike. Henry IV, who like Constantine had changed his creed, was above all things the man of wide political views and broad human sympathies, somewhat sceptical in religion, though perhaps more inclined to the Catholic than to the Reformed position. His path was full of dangers. The Jesuits, the Catholic League, the Catholic democracy of Paris, were formidable foes. And the agitators taught whatever might assist their cause, and that meant the doctrines of violence; armed resistance to the legitimate king, the supremacy of the people, tyrannicide.



Inquisition, revolution, assassination, with Jesuits pulling the wires and the Guises wielding the sword, was what faced Henry, while behind him the earnest Huguenots gave him their blood and their swords. And if his courage and his right did much to place him on the throne, it will not be too much to say that toleration did as much. For he had perceived the virtue of that word, and he made it his rule of conduct. Could France have retained the position he had so dearly and well won, the whole course of her history might have been changed.

Beyond the narrow sea from France, England had run a curious race. The outbreak of the Reformation coincided with two incidents that reacted strongly on it. The first was the presence on the throne of a sovereign of despotic and centralizing disposition almost equal to that of William of Normandy. Henry VIII was not only a despot of the Renaissance, but he was also in difficulties as to the succession to the throne for lack of a male heir; and for other reasons also he wished to get rid of his wife, Katharine of Aragon. From this arose negotiations with the Papacy at the time of the sack of Rome, further confused by international complications that for a time ranged Henry with Francis against Charles V. And the result was that not getting what he wanted from Rome, which was dominated by Charles, Henry rapidly drifted away towards independent action.

There were indications long before this epoch that remote England might break away from the Popes.



William the Conqueror had successfully resisted the dictation of Hildebrand; later the English Parliament had almost repudiated the French Popes of Avignon; while Wycliffe had pointed the way for Hus and left behind him many seeds of Protestantism.

These tendencies strengthened the highly individual course of Henry. His irregular divorce, the irregular marriage to Ann Boleyn, the irregular legitimation of their daughter Elizabeth, all carried the king to an open breach with Rome. He proclaimed himself head of the English Church, while condemning what he declared to be the heresies of Luther; he spoiled the monasteries, but founded the Church of England, which many of its members from that day to this think of and call a branch of the Catholic Church, and not without sundry good arguments. Henry had, in fact, though for inadequate motives, opened a middle course between Rome and Wittenberg. And essentially this substitution of the national king for the Pope as head of a national clergy carried awkwardly bound up with it the new idea of the non-moral state as conceived by Macchiavelli and rapidly developed by a new school of jurists and theorists, the Politiques in France, soon to be followed by writers like Hobbes and Selden in England.

So long as Henry ruled, Protestantism did not get very much beyond this in England, for the king permitted no deviation from the narrow path he had marked out and was ever ready with the fagot and the halter. But after his death, in 1547, the Reformation worked fast, especially among the extremists



and Puritans. As in France, a struggle took place, in which Mary, the zealous Catholic, and Elizabeth, the lukewarm Protestant, played the chief parts. The accession of James Stuart was marked by an Act of Conformity aimed at Puritanism; and from that time on we have a struggle getting more and more acute between the Anglican Church, Protestant in little more than name, and the real reforming elements. The latter became more and more complex, more and more zealous, more and more important, especially after the first quarter of the seventeenth century. They had their brief hour of triumph under the tolerant dictator Cromwell. In their diversity and self-government they tended towards sectarianism, democracy, and a split between Church and State. And their most characteristic expression may be found in Cromwell's Independents and in the Scotch Presbyterianism of John Knox.

This contemporary and disciple of Calvin came to the front in the period following the death of Henry VIII, when the Reformation was making great strides in England. It was in part his influence in the direction of the Genevan doctrine of the Eucharist that introduced the chief dogmatic divergence in the articles of the Church of England from the Roman doctrine. But later he was little more the friend of the Anglican than of the Roman Church, for he rejected the government of bishops and fought the cause of Presbyterianism. His views were sombre, his courage undaunted, his character uncompromising; and he succeeded in stamping his personality



on the new faith of Scotland. One other thing may well be noted, that in the struggle against Mary Stuart, waged with all the acrimony of the tribal disputes that chronically raged in Scotland, the opposition was not only between Catholic and Protestant, but also, though in a less obvious way, between the idea of the supreme monarch by divine right and the self-governing congregation drawing and delegating power according to the sacred texts of the Bible.

In the Netherlands the Reformation reached perhaps its highest point. The revolt of the provinces against Spain brought forward in William the Silent of the House of Orange, a prince in whom many of the elements of the movement blended happily. He stood for a new compromise in government between the monarch's will and that of the community. He believed in toleration and not in exclusivism. He was the man of his own times and of the future as well, for he was perhaps the first leader of Europe who adopted the new mental attitude of recognising that one's adversary may after all have something to say for himself, that truth is not a fixed but a personal and fluctuating quantity. In the slow crumbling down of Roman ideas, there is no greater landmark than that; and it was fit that the Jesuits' hand should be behind the dagger that struck William the Silent down in 1584.

In 1609, and, after a new struggle, in 1648, Holland won her independence from Spain. Her people were in part Catholic, but mostly Protestant. Of the latter



a few followed Arminius in a doctrine similar to that of Servetus and Socinus, while the greater part were Calvinist. There was some degree of struggle and persecution, as was almost inevitable. But on the whole it is true to say that Holland in the seventeenth century takes the lead among the nations of Europe for toleration, and particularly for the way in which her universities open their arms to the persecuted thinkers of England, of France, and of Germany. Rationalism in government, in thought, and in conscience, was there rapidly developed as the real legacy of the Reformation to Europe.

One great state has so far escaped mention, and will serve as a text on which to hang much that has not so far been said. With Spain it will not be out of place to come to the horrors and abominations of the long period of rancorous war that closed with the Peace of Westphalia, that smeared Christianity with indelible stains of blood flowing from a mortal wound.

Philip attempted to carry out with the Spanish monarchy what his father had failed to accomplish with a wider heritage. The enormous wealth drawn by Spain from America, her strong centralized organization, her superb army and skilful generals, supported by the equally efficient black-robed army of the Inquisition, were launched at the Protestants of France, England, and the Netherlands. No compromise was admitted, no quarter was given, and what followed was horrible. In the name of religion whole populations were devastated, diabolical cruelty and



outrage were licensed, torture and lust were sanctified. And all for very poor results. In France the Spaniards accomplished little. In England they were not able to set foot, owing to the defeat of their Armada. In the Netherlands they succeeded in holding the southern but not the northern half. And the price paid may in a faint way be conveyed by a few statistics of population. In twenty years (1568-1589) Antwerp, the commercial metropolis of Europe, saw her population reduced from 150,000 to 50,000. Ypres, with 200,000 people in the thirteenth century, was reduced to 5000 after the second sack by the Spaniards, and remains a small city to this day. And there were other cases very similar.

Germany suffered almost as severely, and it is suggestive to note how closely the area devastated by these wars followed the old boundary of the Rhine and Danube that marked the frontier of the Roman Empire. The cities that border these rivers suffered the same visitations from the demon armies of religion as did those of the Netherlands. Augsburg, Nuremberg, Ulm, the opulent commercial centres of southern Germany, were devastated very much as Antwerp was. Ulm, with 100,000 people when the Reformation began, and with a new prosperity at the present day, still has only 50,000 people. In the valley of the Rhine, Worms fell from 70,000 before the Reformation to 40,000 in 1600; then followed the Thirty Years' War, and in 1815 the population was given at only 5000; it is now increased to about 20,000. But the horrors of the period are inexhausti-



ble, and sickening. Like a tender child, streaming with blood and half demented, struggling to escape from the hands of bestial soldiers and torturing priests, while all around the blackening timbers of her home pour flames and smoke, the Europe of the future, gashed and indelibly disfigured, kept her eyes, still hoping, on the faint horizon, struggled, struggled, and finally escaped from the almost fatal ordeal.



## CHAPTER XV

### FROM THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA TO THE VATICAN COUNCIL

IF one had to pick the names of three men who, more than any others, illustrate the tendencies of the half-century that followed the Peace of Westphalia, they would be those of Bayle, Locke, and Grotius, although the last belongs strictly to an earlier period. One of them was Dutch, another French, though residing in Holland, and the other English.

With Locke we reach the theory of political opportunism and the doctrine, if it can be so called, of compromise between Parliament and monarch that marked the fall of the Stuarts and the establishment of William of Orange on the throne of England (1688). While Louis XIV in France, and for the most part the European monarchies down to the great revolutionary era (1789–1871), were using the theory of divine right to establish bureaucratic despotism, the English and Dutch were variously contributing to the growth of the opposite mode of politics, on which is based so much that we know at the present day.

Grotius gave expression to something else. His work slightly antedates the settlement of 1648, but its influence was not really felt until that date. Europe was crying aloud for deliverance from the anarchy with which the great struggle threatened her.



The legal and classical studies of the Renaissance had opened the way for a restatement of the old juristic theory of the *jus naturale*. Suarez and Gentilis were the pioneers whom Grotius closely followed, publishing in 1625 his *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, the first great treatise of international law, the inevitable substitute for the now disrupted law of the Church. The conception of a lay code, based on a certain measure of neighbourly human regard instead of on the decrees of the Curia, regulating the intercourse of nations in the same manner as the great compacts of Augsburg, of Nantes, and of Westphalia had regulated the intercourse of individuals of different faiths within national borders, proved a kernel from which, as everyone knows, the greatest political movement of our own day has slowly been evolved. Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries such doctrines as that of the balance of power, and of the rights of neutrals, such tendencies as may be found in the assembling of international congresses, all belong to the range of ideas of which Grotius may, in a sense, claim to be the father.

Bayle is perhaps even more important. With him we reach the man bred within the Church, steeped in the old learning and theology, but in whom the new spirit of enquiry and criticism has worked so far that the sceptical point of view has been attained. Bayle enquired freely into all subjects, upheld the freedom of investigation and opinion, and made large use of the press. His periodical, the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, was an event in European



thought, as it was the prototype of that flood of popular reviews and magazines which at the present day give such a free vent to opinion. His *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (1696) was a precursor of revolution, for it gave the outline which Diderot and D'Alembert were soon to fill in with their epoch-making *Encyclopédie*.

But what have Locke, Grotius, Bayle, to do with religion? How stood the Papacy at this epoch, and the Protestant offshoots formed at the time of the wars of religion? The answer is that the activity displayed in the general direction which we have just considered was accompanied by a corresponding reaction in organized religion. Although the minor Protestant sects were continuing a steady development, particularly in England and her colonies, and in less degree in Holland and Germany, the Papacy, the Lutheran and Anglican churches, were in a state of reaction not astonishing under the circumstances. In attempting to narrate the movements of the period that lies between 1648 and 1789, the relations of the Roman Church with the Bourbon monarchy will give the best central line.

France had witnessed remarkable developments since the accession of the first Bourbon, Henry of Navarre. Richelieu, Mazarin, Louis XIV, in turn directed affairs, and with these statesmen what prevails is, in theory, the divine right of kings, or let us say arbitrary despotism; in practice the breakdown of what was left of feudal power for the benefit of centralized bureaucracy.



We need not dwell on the political and military sides of the great monarchy of Louis XIV, but on the religious side several matters deserve notice. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 tore up the settlement whereby the Huguenots had secured toleration. Since the edict of Henry IV they had in fact gained little ground. They were an industrious, self-respecting class of men, but small and of slight influence. Louis, on the other hand, was at the height of his power. With advancing years he had come more and more under the influence of the priests. Mme. de Maintenon, who at the last married him, was a bigot, and that proved the deciding factor. Thenceforth, by the will of the king, Catholicism was enforced in France, and continued for all practical purposes the exclusive state religion for the next hundred years.

But if Catholicism was enforced, it was after a fashion that would not have commended itself to any of the great Popes and Fathers. The forms of religion and its pomp became everything, and insensibly melted into adulation of the divinely appointed *Roi Soleil*, that suggested more than once the position of Henry VIII in the sixteenth century or even the adoration that had once surrounded the Emperor Diocletian. For it was not only the administration of military and fiscal affairs that Louis had concentrated at Versailles, but the whole intellectual, artistic, and religious energy of France. It was an all-pervading influence, so that even the Church was embossed with the same Bourbon mark as the poli-

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tics, the furniture, the tactics, the etiquette, and every other manifestation of the epoch. Formalism, rhetoric, inflation, æstheticism, pose, and latent insincerity mark the Church in France through this period.

There were revolts, however. Pascal, Fénelon, Port Royal, Gallicanism, Jansenism are names that conjure up ideas of internal dissension, of a spirit of protest still working, though in much attenuated form. Righteousness and mystic piety are associated with these names, dogmatic divergence, leanings away from the empty formalism then in fashion; and with Gallicanism something of perhaps even greater import.

Gallicanism was the result of a long-spun situation. In somewhat obvious terms it might be described as a territorial tendency towards detachment, which made the French clergy incline to split away from the Papacy just as the Frankish monarchy had from the Empire. In a more specific sense, and without recalling the incidents of early centuries, we may pass to the year 1682 when the French clergy drew up certain articles with the approval of the king. By these it was declared that the authority of the Roman See did not extend to temporal affairs, in which the king was the supreme power, and that the oath of allegiance overrode any Papal dispensation or injunction; that councils were superior to the Pope; and that the special customs of the Gallican Church remained in force. Against these declarations the Popes protested on more than one occasion during



the succeeding century. Yet the threatened secession of the Gallican Church has not from that day to this come much nearer accomplishment.

Apart from the flashes of vigour, or of independence, which we have just noted, the history of the Church during the century and a half that stretches from the Peace of Westphalia to the French Revolution was one of decreasing strength, of gradual stagnation, of apathy, even of scepticism. The terrific effort of the Counter-Reformation had been followed by an inevitable reaction. The prestige, the vitality, the faith of the Church suffered a visible decline. More particularly during the eighteenth century the monastic houses lost their inmates to an extraordinary extent, save in the more backward parts of Italy and Spain. The occupants of the Papal throne were mostly weak men, doubtful of their position, though still making efforts to assert it.

Even the Order of Jesuits could not resist the growing scepticism of the age, and fell into a great decay. Since the days when Father Mariana had publicly taught the doctrine of tyrannicide in Rome and Madrid, they had generally been held responsible for the many assassinations and attempts at assassination that had marked the great religious struggle. And even if the direct evidence for this had generally been wanting, yet the moral connection was the all-important one, and as to that there was little enough doubt. So that the Jesuits had attached to them an odium difficult to live down in a less believing and less strenuous age. And as the education of laymen



increased, while statesmanship was becoming secular and economic, their persistence in attempting to control politics through the confessional produced a deadly jealousy and enmity which in the end overwhelmed them.

Pascal dealt them the first heavy blow, in his *Lettres Provinciales*, by his merciless exposure of their casuistry and inverted morality. His dexterous wit and ridicule did its fatal work on them, and opened the way for other satire which, in the hands of writers like Montesquieu and Voltaire, was soon to help pull down the Church itself and Bourbonism with it. No one rallied to the Jesuits' support, and it was found that in all their wonderful equipment for intellectual conflict, irony and wit were the two weapons they could neither wield nor withstand.

The second blow came midway through the eighteenth century. At that epoch the Jesuits numbered over twenty thousand, and they possessed about one thousand establishments of education. In 1759, Pomal, the secularizing Portuguese minister, trumped up some doubtful charges against the Jesuits, expelled them, and confiscated their property. His example was promptly followed by Choiseul in France, the issue being placed on the ground that the society acquired wealth through commercial transactions. Spain followed suit. Great pressure was brought to bear on the Pope, who in 1773 decreed the abolition of the Order.

The abolition of the Society of Jesus coincided, and not by chance, with the great wave of scepticism that



swept the eighteenth century on to the breakers of the French Revolution. The death of Louis XIV had closed an epoch in France. The monarchy in the hands of the Regent, Philippe d'Orléans, lost its prestige. The throne no longer supported literature, which promptly addressed itself to a fast-growing circle of educated readers. Montesquieu, following Pascal's lead, fired delicately barbed shafts of wit at Bourbonism itself, and turned against the Church with an outspokenness that reveals much as to the growing unbelief of France. For in 1721, in his *Lettres Persanes*, he ventured to declare that "the Pope is an old idol to whom incense is offered from mere habit." Voltaire followed, and went further, for in a long literary career of over half a century, he continuously attacked the Church. He ridiculed the mythical, legendary, and miraculous, on rationalistic grounds. Of all his famous utterances on this text perhaps the most pungent is the one ridiculing a royal decree prohibiting the practice of certain psychic disorders in connection with the schismatic Jansenists. "In the king's name," says Voltaire, "God is forbidden to commit miracles here."<sup>1</sup> The epigram illustrates well enough the relative importance of Church and State, and that the faith of the age was not precisely that of the time of the Crusades and of St. Francis.

There was another aspect of Voltaire's attack on Christianity. In the attempt to maintain its privi-

<sup>1</sup> De par le Roi, défense à Dieu,  
De faire miracle en ce lieu.



leged position by a vigorous enforcement of its laws, the Church displayed a cruel rigorism that echoed the barbarities of the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries. In scandalous cases, like that of de La Barre, Voltaire's voice was raised loudest on behalf of justice and of humanitarianism, conceptions rapidly making headway in his time, and in some measure through his efforts. His "Ecrasez l'infâme!" was the indignant protest of toleration against revolting barbarities and the unfeeling cruelty of Latin despotism.

Few people nowadays realize how comparatively recent is the growth of the ideas of humanitarianism or philanthropy, of social justice and of toleration. Of the last something has already been said, but the others are inseparable and are also part of the aftermath of the Reformation. It would be useless to attempt to find in literature prior to the year 1700 anything more than a faint beginning of ideas that now, two hundred years later, are rapidly dominating civilization. It is true that such ideas are to be found in the Stoics, as in Seneca, or that, turning to a later age, passages of Chaucer might be selected that reflect a spirit not far removed from that of Oliver Goldsmith, but there is no large, steady, continuous movement leading to immediate and important results. It is only after 1700 that these ideas make rapid progress in western Europe; they range all the way from the practical to the idealistic, from the efforts of reformers to improve the working of the criminal law to the sickly sentimental art of a Bernardin de St. Pierre or a Greuze, all the way from the religious pietism of



a Spener or a Wesley, to the anti-Christian sensibility and morbid tenderness of a Jean Jacques Rousseau. These tendencies must be viewed a little more closely. It would be hopeless to attempt to trace them in all their ramifications. Some aspects must of necessity be neglected, others will be touched on when the nineteenth century is reached, and for the present purpose it is only those most intimately associated with religion that will be dealt with.

In Germany religion was hard and narrow when the Peace of Westphalia was signed; it could hardly have been otherwise. But all the elements of a real religious life had been stirred and were still alive below the surface. It was the work of Philip Spener (1635-1705) to stimulate them to activity, and by founding Pietism to give Germany a new religious movement. He was in nothing more modern than in his opposition to formal theology, and he laid his stress on conduct and morality.

Just as Spener died Wesley was born, who was to carry a similar work to an even greater result in England. His revolt against the narrow forms and aristocratic restrictions of the Church of England, his democratic sympathies and ethical leanings, made him the real successor of Wycliffe, and the founder of modern nonconformity. It was not only the Established Church that was narrow, intolerant, and unfruitful, but the sects it had thrown off during the Tudor and Stuart periods, especially those whose strongholds were now in the American colonies. Wesley blew a breath of humanity, of realism, and of charity into



religion; and he founded the great Wesleyan denomination.

In France it was not possible that a movement exactly corresponding should take place, for the Huguenots had been driven out, and an absolute monarchy of the most extreme type had been established, and had enforced the Catholic discipline. So what change took place was merely that religion came to mean more and more compliance, less and less faith. Even high-placed Church dignitaries scoffed openly at the beliefs which they were prepared to enforce by torture and execution. With a tremendous development proceeding in education and the press, scepticism presently increased and atheism showed its head. Soon there were two camps in France, Christian and non-Christian, and of necessity no gradations between these two extremes; a man must profess Rome, or unbelief, there was no midway house. And it was this that differentiated the liberation of thought in France from what took place in Germany and England, where the move away from the Roman ideas comported an infinite gradation of doubt, enquiry, criticism, and revolt, by a hundred shades of Christian theories only watered out by degrees to the point of actual unbelief.

In France the anti-religious current took two directions, towards atheism with the Encyclopædists, towards deism with Rousseau. The Encyclopædia was a composite work, and men of all opinions wrote for it, yet of its many contributors Holbach undoubtedly expresses most strongly the anti-religious, atheistic



side which may properly be emphasized. It should be remarked, however, that this school of writers was almost as narrow and bigoted in its views as the French clergy itself. With Rousseau we come to something far more fluid and human.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) belonged to one of the lower social strata just touched by the increased range of education of the eighteenth century. He emerged from evil social and moral surroundings by his facility as a writer, and by his audacity in attacking the social order, a sure road to literary fame even in that age. At forty he found himself suddenly famous, and he worked his vogue assiduously. He denounced property, wealth, and government. He championed the under man whom he idealized and sentimentalized, and in that lay the great force of his work, coming as it did at a moment when in France and generally in Europe the social adjustment bore with terrible severity on the lower classes. In Rousseau the ignoble always tends to soar to the empyrean, and religion is the cult of a benevolent Supreme Being, who, by first destroying all that Europe had built in so many centuries, will accomplish the under man's apotheosis. It is a programme of individual revolt against a crushing system of intellectual and ethical tyranny, and a programme of social happiness.

The French Revolution broke out eleven years after Rousseau's death. Voltaire, like so many others, had predicted it, and had foretold that it would begin by an attack on the Church. This prophecy was



not fulfilled, and yet events came near justifying it. Financial chaos and the struggle of the middle class for power marked its first stages, but was soon followed by mob rule and the assertion of democratic ideas. The intellectual class took the lead in displacing the priest and the baron, and the common man then came near pushing out the intellectual class. In the turmoil, feudalism and the Church appeared to sink; their estates and their privileges were called in. Eventually demagogues got control, and at last Hébert closed the churches and called on France to adopt atheism as its creed.

This extreme point of the Revolution brought about what is perhaps its strangest incident. At that moment political power passed into the hands of Robespierre. He was a Rousseauist of extreme type, a fanatic of a new and fantastic cult of Nature and Man. He struck down in Hébert both the political opponent and the atheist, the enemy of religion. And once in complete control he attempted to force the worship of Nature, equipped with creed, ethics, and festivals complete, on a far from enthusiastic people. He was able to celebrate his festival of the Supreme Being, and immediately after fell headlong from power, bringing the new cult down with him.

For the five years that followed, France was governed by a clique of professed atheists. The war waged between them and the Church, between Republicans and Royalists in the Vendée, was nothing but a belated phase of the wars of religion. Extermination, hatred, fanaticism, played their accus-



tomed parts; and the Directoire almost threw away Bonaparte's conquest of Italy by seeing in the Pope an enemy whose destruction would be the supreme triumph. And by this extraordinary and violent conflict, with so little apparently to prepare it, we can gauge the depth of the revolt that had taken place, a revolt of the long-repressed intellect and conscience of Europe, and of its long-tyrannized under classes.

In 1799 Bonaparte drove the inefficient Directoire from power. He realized the small numbers of the anti-religious party and that it was politically dead. So he resolutely set to work to reëstablish the Church, but on conditions. These conditions in the main amounted to this, that the control of the state over the Church should be much more complete than formerly, especially on the financial side; that the liberty and equality which the Republic had shed its blood for should receive its religious application in absolute freedom of conscience.

During an intercourse of fifteen years with the Papacy, whose power he had in a measure restored in France, Napoleon fought hard for supremacy of Emperor over Pope, and by dint of force and severity carried his point. Yet, after all, it was he who gave the Church its first push upward after its long and almost fatal decline through the eighteenth century, and who therefore helped on the great revival that was to mark the nineteenth, and that was to carry the Papacy to the triumph of the Vatican Council.

Pius VII was made Pope in 1800; he was mild, honest, steadfast; he commanded respect, and although



not to be ranked with the great Popes, had real qualifications for his office. During his stirring pontificate the affairs of the Papacy took a sudden turn for the better. The causes of the reaction are difficult to analyze, but an explanation of them must be attempted. It must be based first on certain broad movements, and secondly on others that are little more than the incidents of the period.

Viewing Christianity in its widest expression, then, it may be advanced that the religious activity of the eighteenth century in Germany and England, which we have conveniently associated with the Pietists and the Wesleyans, was an inevitable result of the Reformation once the reaction which marked the close of the period of violence had passed. Even in France the humanitarian and sentimental current which we have associated with the names of Rousseau and Robespierre may properly be thought of as part of the same general tendency. When, therefore, the anti-Roman storm of the Revolution has blown over we merely see the current reëstablishing itself, only now with some superficial differences. And the greatest of these differences applies to the Roman Church, which, having been reviled and despoiled, is now chastened, shows once more its deeper and truer qualities, and gets the full benefit of the reaction from revolutionary excesses and the new vogue for ideas of monarchy by divine right that followed the Congress of Vienna.

Pius and his able secretary of state, Consalvi, steered the Papacy on its upward course until 1823.



During that period the Jesuits, who had obscurely clung together after their dissolution, and who had been timidly and tentatively reëstablished during the Revolutionary wars, rapidly rose to power once more. Literature, effecting a rapid change of fashion from classicism, became romantic, and with some of the greatest writers of the period took on a garb of Christian mysticism. The autocratic reaction that marked the fall of Napoleon was seized on as the moment for obtaining control of education, that is of the new system of schools, in which France took the lead, that were to spread enlightenment to the lower classes.

This activity of religion was not without its offsets in a corresponding activity of philosophy and science. But it will make for clearness if for the moment we leave these to one side and trace the continuous effort of the Roman Church down to the year 1870.

The Jesuits, education, mysticism, these are the three great points to keep in mind when dealing with the first half of the nineteenth century; together with one other fact, which was that the Papal government was not keeping up with the rest of Europe in its administrative methods. While the greater part of Europe was prospering economically, and was much better governed by paternal monarchies than it had ever been before, the Roman State had made a direct attempt to return to mediæval conditions, and had in large measure succeeded. The result was that just as Gregory XVI came to the Papal throne in 1831, there was internal revolution, European intervention, and the undisputed establishment of the fact that



next to Turkey the Papal State was the worst governed of Europe.

The pontificate of Gregory XVI (1831-1846) did not mend matters in this respect, and at his death a heavy account of maladministration had to be settled. During this period there had set in a rising tide of mystical enthusiasm, especially for the cult of Mary. The Virgin Mother had received but scant recognition in the early Church, but after the conversion of Constantine, and especially after the Œcumenic Council held in 430 at Ephesus, home of Cybele, Mary had been raised to a position but little inferior to that of the three supreme deities of the Trinity, which she had maintained through the centuries.<sup>1</sup> But now the tendency was to raise her if possible even higher. The sacred and bleeding heart of Mary became the fashionable cult; and a doctrine of infinitely ancient antecedents, as yet held but vaguely and not authoritatively in the Church, became a topic of earnest discussion. Did or did not the Church believe in the immaculate conception of the Virgin, and if so, in precisely what terms? The controversy was an old one. It gathered fresh momentum under Gregory XVI, who sanctioned the use of the word "immaculate" in the service, but it was left to his

<sup>1</sup> Is it hazardous to suggest that from an early period of Asiatic mythology the tendency for the female god to secure the foremost position exists; and that it is only the great political necessities of sovereign worship from the time of Alexander to that of Diocletian that gives to the male god a passing ascendancy?



successor to take the final step, under conditions of some importance.

While the cult of Mary took on the aspects just described, a struggle arose over the question whether the Jesuits, or the Jesuit methods, should control education, particularly in France. The Society had unerringly placed its finger on the vital point. With national education perhaps the greatest achievement of the new century, and with science, so useful to economic development, gaining ground rapidly, the only way of perpetuating the ancient theories of the Church was by securing control of education. For the mind of the child can be moulded, and the ideas that are carefully planted and assiduously cultivated in the tender years will prove ineradicable later.

Through the thirties and forties opposition rose fast against the Jesuits. Some of the most brilliant polemics of the middle of the century were directed against them, and after 1846<sup>1</sup> they passed under a cloud that was to prove, however, of a transitory character. Europe was nearing 1848. Popular forces were rapidly asserting themselves. Toleration in matters of conscience was spreading, with inevitable influence on education. From that moment the contest, a contest still raging, for control of the schools became the greatest of national problems in the Latin states and in less degree in Germany.

The temporary check of the Jesuits coincided roughly with the death of Gregory XVI and the elec-

<sup>1</sup> The publication of Gioberti's *Gesuita Moderno* is the date chosen.



tion of Pius IX. This election of a comparatively obscure cardinal to the Papacy was due to the necessity felt for reforming the Papal administration, for Mastai Ferretti was held to possess just those qualities of personal virtue and of mild theoretical liberalism that would fit the circumstances. He immediately proclaimed an amnesty for political offenders, and this created a wave of popular excitement that showed at once what a combustible situation existed, and how easily the new Pope might prove to be the innocent torch of revolution.

From one reform Pius was pushed on to another, until in 1848 his growing embarrassment was suddenly multiplied a hundredfold by the outbreak of a revolutionary movement that swept Italy from Palermo to Turin, and that spread to France, Germany, and Austria. The Pope reluctantly bowed before the storm, granted a constitution to his subjects, and sent his army to the north to join the Italian forces in a national struggle against Austria. These two steps, taken under compulsion, raised questions of the most vital character. For if the Pope admitted that his subjects should be governed under a parliamentary system, how could he still be thought of as the inspired Vicar of God, divinely chosen, and therefore competent beyond human competence? And again, if the Papal troops were to fight those of Austria, how could the Pope's catholic, that is, international, position be maintained? Would he not sink back into a merely Italian function, and see a Gallican and German Church break away following the example of



the Anglican? Was he not the Pope of German and of Italian alike?

Pius, now slowly falling under Jesuit influence, perceived the fatal dilemma that faced him. He did his timid best to avoid it. Grave trouble ensued. Radetzky defeated Charles Albert of Savoy, and as the Austrians triumphed in northern Italy, the more extreme Italians raised their voices. Democratic leaders like Mazzini and Garibaldi appeared. There was violence in Rome. Pius fled from his capital. A republic was proclaimed, and was finally suppressed by French troops in the summer of 1849.

When Pius returned to Rome he was face to face with a curious situation. Still nominally sovereign of the Papal State he was embarrassed by the presence of the French troops which insured him against revolution, and the people of Rome against the mediævalism of Papal misgovernment. But though the Romans, viewing the Pope from too near, had lost their former enthusiasm for him, the rest of Europe had not. To zealous Catholics in Austria, Bavaria, Belgium, France, he appeared the mild, saintly, and persecuted successor of the martyred St. Peter, or the more recently oppressed Pius VII. And the Jesuits, keeping discreetly below the surface, fanned this Catholic zeal with deadly skill in every part of Europe.

A new movement swept the Church, based in part on the factors just stated, in part on the literary and mystical activity of the earlier part of the century. It concentrated its efforts on the Pope, now little



more than a Jesuit puppet. It was determined to strengthen his position at all costs. With the constant threat to the temporal power presented by Italian nationalism, and with the constant attack on the religious position that came from the increasing scepticism of European thought, it was resolved to place an authority in the hands of the Pope greater than he had ever held before. It was largely the instinctive act of conscious weakness.

This effort of Catholicism revealed itself in a series of incidents that fill twenty of the most remarkable years in the history of the Papacy. Only a few months after Mazzini's Roman Republic had been crushed out of existence a council of Italian bishops met at Spoleto. Among them the lead was taken by the Archbishop of Perugia, Cardinal Pecci, who was later to be Leo XIII. The council believed that the gravity of the situation of the Church lay entirely in the growth of subversive, anti-Roman ideas, and it requested the Pope to define the position of the Church in regard to the tendencies of nineteenth century thought. He was asked to issue for the guidance of his flock a tabular statement of all doctrines that were to be reprobated from the *Social Contract* and the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, which had heralded the first French Republic, to those of Mazzini and other leaders of past or future revolt. The request of the council was complied with, but not until after fifteen years had elapsed; before then another important event had taken place.

While the onslaught on liberalism suggested by the



Council of Spoleto was slowly maturing, it became clear to the governing minds at the Vatican that it had raised incidentally the great question of the Papal authority which the Councils of Constance, Basle, and Trent had not really settled. And the idea rapidly grew that this must now be the policy of Rome, to place beyond question the supremacy of the Pope over the council, to make him the only and unquestioned head of the Church. After this the rest would be easy. Meanwhile the best course would be to have the Pope first assume this power tentatively, and if no insurmountable opposition arose, this would pave the way for its recognition by a council of the Church.

Now, there happened to be a question much at the heart of the Church at that moment, as we have already seen, that of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. There was virtual unanimity on the point, and no inconsiderable enthusiasm. The doctrine was ancient, more ancient even than the Church, though few realized this, but it had never been officially proclaimed. Here, then, was the very opportunity to push the Papal prerogative just one step further than it had ever been pushed. There was a minor reason too: that the doctrine had always been a favourite one with the Jesuits, but opposed by their enemies, the Dominicans.

In a pamphlet written in 1847 on the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Father Perrone, a notable Jesuit theologian, had taken the novel and interesting doctrinal position, that it was not necessary for dogma to be based on scriptural texts, nor even on



its having been a continuous tradition of the Church. For the Church might be held to have a latent tradition, long secret, and eventually revealed by the action of faith. The act of faith in this case was the great movement of Mary worship.

This was accepted as the doctrinal basis. The ground was carefully prepared. On the 8th of December, 1854, Pius issued a decree on his sole authority, declaring the Immaculate Conception to be an article of dogma. This was gladly accepted throughout the Catholic world save by a few theologians here and there. But notwithstanding this success, the Pope and his advisers felt so uneasy as to the validity of their action, that they did not venture to submit it for approval when the Vatican Council met sixteen years later.

That was the first great step; the second came in 1864, with the issue of the bull *Quanta Cura* containing the first Syllabus. This was something like the tabular statement which the Council of Spoleto had demanded, and contained no less than eighty clauses, in which were specified the numerous opinions which the Pope branded as errors and therefore to be rejected by all Catholics. Among the heads under which these errors were enumerated may be noted pantheism, communism, civil marriage, rationalism, the temporal power, socialism, latitudinarianism (modernism had not yet been invented), and Christian morals and ethics. By the last clause, a summary of all the rest, it was declared to be a damnable error to believe that "the Roman Pontiff may and



should become reconciled and in accord with progress, liberalism, and recent civilization."

The bull *Quanta Cura* created a sensation. But when it is coolly examined it reveals nothing but what is consistent. Just as when Contarini and Caraffa had led the two opposite camps, it was the uncompromising one that had won. And in its triumph there was logic, for it contained the whole essence of the Roman position. The guild of priests, whose tradition stretched back to Greece and Rome, to Judæa and Asia, whose ideas and power reposed on the formulas of Aristotle and Justinian, and on traditions and rites held sacred for a score of centuries, could not accept enquiry, criticism, free opinion, without surrendering all they stood for. They perceived it clearly, they acted up to what they saw, and the thoughtless wondered at their consistency, boldness, and strength. The second Syllabus, published within these last few months, is merely a reaffirmation of the stand taken in 1864; the only change to be noted is that in present-day modernism Rome is faced by an even greater problem due to the increasing effect of enlightenment on the more intellectual elements of the Church.

The French and the Italian governments promptly prohibited the publication of the bull *Quanta Cura*; it was a declaration of war, and moreover a shock to the average educated public. The Church stiffened its resistance. Behind the movement towards the strengthening of the Papal prerogative was the question of the temporal power. Many Catholics in every



part of the world believed it to be a source of weakness rather than of strength, and would have been easily reconciled to its loss. The Jesuits viewed it otherwise, and saw in it not only present possession of authority over central Italy, but the territorial independence that kept the Pope free from any national connection and secured his position as head of all Catholics equally. This party said, and still says, and the argument is historically valid, that should the Pope accept a national king at Rome he must inevitably sink sooner or later to the position of an Italian bishop.

And in these years the temporal power, still under the protection of French bayonets, was very seriously menaced. Cavour had just won the north, and Garibaldi the south of Italy to national unity. Rome was directly menaced. And preparations therefore continued for exalting the threatened Pontiff. The publication of the bull *Quanta Cura* was followed by the preliminary steps for assembling a council of the Church for the special purpose of proclaiming the Papal infallibility, a theological variant for the plainer term, supremacy.

It took six years to prepare the council; it met on the 8th of December, 1869, and adjourned on the 18th of July, 1870. Bishops and theologians arrived from all parts of the world, and among them were two conspicuous groups. One of these was quite small, but very distinguished; it comprised those churchmen who still believed in the conciliar tradition partly for its historical value, partly because they



hoped to find in that direction some help in reconciling their faith with the general movement of their time. The other was far more numerous, but signified nothing more than the sheeplike obedience of the mass, or at best its enthusiasm for the Catholic machine of which it saw the principle in the Papal supremacy.

The whole effort of the council centred about the question of the Papal infallibility. The Roman case was founded on Aquinas. The great theologian of the Church, basing himself on a forged *libellus* used by Urban IV against the Greek claims, had declared that to the Pope alone belonged the right of pronouncing in matters of dogma, and that from him alone proceeded the authority of the councils. It was true that the councils had decreed otherwise, and that even the canons of the last one, the Council of Trent, called on the clergy for an oath never to interpret the Scriptures otherwise than after the unanimous consent of the Fathers. But that mattered little. The learning and liberalism of a few men like Strossmayer, Dupanloup, Hefele, Acton, and Döllinger could avail nothing against the solid vote of the Latin bishops carefully rounded up by the Jesuits, and the dogma of the Infallibility was duly acclaimed.

What was the significance of the step? The belief in the Papal infallibility was a very old tradition of the Church, and yet its conversion into dogma amounted to an internal revolution. For in reality the decision of the Council of the Vatican was an act of self-immolation; it was a declaration that coun-



cils were now useless, and that their power had passed to the Pope. So that the Church, which had started with councils and no Popes, now appears destined to finish with Popes and no councils.

In strict definition infallibility was held to apply to all pronouncements made in a formal manner by the Pope in matters of doctrine,<sup>1</sup> and that in the sense of positive truth, not of immunity from error. But as Selden had said, with rough wisdom, nearly three centuries before: "The Pope is infallible where he hath power to command, that is, where he must be obeyed." And at the very moment that the Vatican Council was acclaiming Pius IX infallible, France was plunging into war with Germany. A few days later her troops left Rome, the Italian troops occupied the city, and the Papacy had lost the temporal power which it had held since the days of the Carolingians.

<sup>1</sup> Decree of the 10th of July, 1870.



## CHAPTER XVI

### CROSS-CURRENTS

IN the previous chapter much was neglected for the sake of carrying the history of the Roman Church connectedly through a momentous epoch. We must now turn back and close the gap, by tracing the lines on which that part of Europe which had thrown off Romanism had progressed.

And first let us look at a very large subject that will send us forward and backward from Plato, and Aristotle, and Aquinas, to the great intellectual movement which followed that of the Encyclopædists in France, that of German philosophy. For philosophy, and its branch theology, are of the essence of the history of the Church and have perhaps been a little neglected. Philosophy, without ever achieving it, has always claimed as its chief object the coördination of all human knowledge, and theology has been merely a variant adding to philosophy a cult, a legend, or an example. The legendary side of Christianity has received as much attention as appeared necessary, and what has been said of its theology, in terms of the Greek and Latin languages and thought, should also suffice. But since this was done in early chapters, and the subject is difficult and at the very root of the whole matter, it may be as well partly to restate the case in formal terms.



A fundamental distortion lies at the base of the Greek philosophy, and of the Christian theology which was based on it. Language was assumed to be a perfect medium for the expression of thought. Truth was assumed to be absolute, and the most complex thoughts to be expressible in so many words. The world as a whole is still victim of these assumptions. But for those who will accept a more humble level for human perception, knowledge, and mental power, for those who will apply evolutionary ideas to language as they would to men, the opposite position may prove more convincing even if not argued out at full length. And that is that language is an imperfect vehicle of thought, that it loses vitality with age, that any cosmic theory or absolute truth stated in terms of philosophy or of religion is little more than an inadequate play on words, that only tentative statements in evolutionary terms connote a right mode of thought. Of the two modes one is ancient, or Roman, or Christian, the other is modern.

Only one illustration of the matter here in question can be given, one of those famous controversial questions that fill many pages of the history of the Church, many volumes of philosophy and of theology. This is the question of free will or predestination. Without going back beyond the Christian era, we find Pelagius holding that man was foreordained to salvation, but subject to the assertion of his will; Augustine held that predestination was absolute and apart from human conditions. The latter view secured imperial support, became the rule of the Church, and was



transmitted to the Protestant sects through Luther and Calvin. But what does it all mean? Does it mean anything? What does it really signify to say, or to deny, that a man can exercise freedom of will? We know in a plain and obvious way how and why it is a man eats a meal, commits a burglary, subscribes to a charity. Our explanation may not go very far, is not abstract, yet it fits the facts closely enough. Are we getting a greater degree of truth by saying that he has exercised freedom of will in doing it, or that he was predestined to do it? Or are we not merely setting up a verbal formula, that adds nothing to our knowledge? In fact, the only way in which we can deepen our knowledge is not by juggling with these formulas, but by doing the work now being undertaken in our laboratories of experimental psychology, experimenting and discovering what physical processes and nervous reactions are caused by external impressions. And along that line considerable information is now rapidly being accumulated.

This, then, is the reason why in this book, thus far, philosophy and theology have had little emphasis thrown on them; for they have been viewed as theoretical incidents arising from the play of political, linguistic and emotional forces. Theology has always provided formulas for proving cases, and never those statements of fact that might really throw some ray of light on the course trodden by humanity. But with the epoch of the Renaissance and Reformation philosophy opens a new chapter, and deserves more attention as it gradually draws away from theology,



and moves slowly towards the complete break with the old tradition which it reaches at the close of the nineteenth century.

The birth of modern philosophy was very sudden; it was produced by the shock and deliverance of the Reformation; and it showed two sides at the very beginning. A century after Luther had begun his work we get Descartes in France, and Bacon in England; they stood equally for the liberation of the European mind from the old ideas, yet their paths were widely divergent.

Bacon boldly rejected Aristotle and the syllogistic method. His emphasis was on observation and facts, and he believed that metaphysics could never be achieved save through a long preliminary process. He laid down, therefore, the fundamental position in a revolutionary mode of thought, that was eventually to prevail, though it is only in very recent years that the beginning made by Bacon, and continued by Locke, has led to large consequences, first with Herbert Spencer and now advancing further with Bergson.

Descartes, who is generally termed the father of modern philosophy, was radical but not revolutionary; he rejected the conclusions of the old philosophy but adhered to its method; he abandoned Aquinas but not Aristotle. Beginning with doubt, now so thoroughly developed since the days of Abélard, he swept all away until he reached his famous fundamental: *I think, therefore I am*; which was very important because entirely subversive of the position of the Church,



yet otherwise, in plain sense, nothing but a convenient formula. Thence, still gripped by the old method of thought, he tried to reach a cosmic conception, and certainty. And it is this aspiration for certainty more than anything else that marks the Latin mind, and all it has transmitted to the European. Few thinkers even to-day have the courage to accept weakness and uncertainty as necessary and natural limitations.

Descartes was followed by Spinoza (1632-1677), who developed the ideas of his predecessors, and came to a rich pantheism of a pronouncedly anti-religious character. In this, Spinoza came near Bayle, and helped to create that stream of ideas which in the eighteenth century became the deism and atheism of the French. In England, Hume, a contemporary of Voltaire, was the chief representative of negative scepticism; while Germany, which was later to draw the inspiration for its rich philosophy from Spinoza, produced so early as Leibnitz (1646-1716) a universal scholar whose speculations in the direction of Christian reunion were curiously enough developed from that master.

The Wars of Religion had depressed Germany lower than any other part of Europe. More than once in earlier centuries she had been on the point of taking the lead in European civilization. During the ninth and tenth centuries, while France and Spain and Italy were being devastated by Norsemen and Mussulmans, the secure Rhine and Danube, from Koblentz to Ratisbon, were developing in compara-



tive peace. Before the Reformation this was one of the most peopled and flourishing parts of Europe, and although the language and customs were still rude, they promised great things. Luther's virile pen was rapidly creating a modern German literature when the desolation of the Wars of Religion burst over Germany. After 1648 the country was exhausted and for some time failed to recover. It was only well on in the eighteenth century that by an almost sudden effort Germany found herself again. In the realm of politics the House of Hohenzollern seemed to promise a greater and more united nationalism than in the past. In the domain of thought there was a swift development of literature, a sort of belated Elizabethan era, and chief in that literature came a remarkable line of philosophers who were to leave a deep impress on European thought.

The limits of this book once more impose a close selection, and so Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche must serve to illustrate three chief phases of German philosophy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With Kant (1724-1804) we have the great eighteenth century metaphysician, the analyzer and builder of the rationale of causality, the shuffler of verbal formulas after the manner of the Greeks, but in a new language. In him there is, further, a certain deep, primitive purity of thought, as of a clean whiff of icy air from far-away Königsberg blowing down to the sultry Mediterranean. For apart from Kant's stiff constructions, the backbone of all subsequent metaphysics, there is a morality about him, a reliance on



innate rectitude and sense of duty, that suggest the possibility of a Teutonic substitute for the ethics of Romanism, such as they are.

Kant came just before the French Revolution. But his more practical doctrines of conduct were in part blended into the ideas of the great League of Virtue, which after 1808 helped so largely to stir German patriotism and make the War of Liberation possible. The work of Hegel (1770-1831) came after that war had closed and Prussia had regained at Waterloo the prestige she had lost at Jena. Hegel was an intellectual giant and the greatest European force during a good half-century or more. He was intensely German in his love of the large generalization and cosmic thesis to be proved at all hazards. But although in this direction he was naïvely echoing in a youthful tongue the older philosophy, he was intensely vital and modern in other directions. His great innovation, using the word in a generous sense, was the introduction of the evolutionary idea as the foundation of history; and although his particular application of this idea to the German people and the House of Hohenzollern was somewhat provincial and might not command general confidence, yet his point of view marked an immense advance in thought, had the deepest influence in France and England, and prepared the way for the more fully developed doctrines that were soon to follow.

It was Darwin in the middle of the century who, combining vast knowledge with a ready pen, gave the world a series of popular formulas for the evolu-



tionary mode of thought. And it so happened that Prussia in the years following Hegel's death entered into a desperate political "struggle for life," from which she was to emerge victorious, a "survival of the fittest" under the leadership of Bismarck. This struggle coincided with the youthful years of Nietzsche (1844-1900), and with him certain tendencies find their ultimate expression. With Kant and Hegel, German philosophy stands aloof from Christianity and yet accepts a nebulous deism that may form a golden bridge from religion to nationalism, from faith in the Judæo-Roman God to faith in a vague Teutonic supreme being who occasionally suggests Valhalla, occasionally the Hohenzollerns, and occasionally a mere frigid ethical abstraction. But Nietzsche moves a step further. With him struggle and not attainment is the all in all; and in struggle he acclaims the superman, the fittest whose survival Nature has ordained, the hero of force. He rejects Christianity not only in its creed, but in its established moral code, against which he launches some of his most violent attacks. He is the counterpart in philosophy, less balance and poise, of what Bismarck is in politics.

In the philosophy of the Germans, then, we may see a great current of ideas, influencing masses of men, and showing in the main a large dislocation from the old religious ideas of Europe. In its more narrowly German relations we see it blending with a great political realization accomplished ruthlessly through war, and therefore giving a fictitious present-day value in that country to the cult of force; and



blending also with a violent economic expansion of world-wide effect and full of pregnant factors, of which for our purpose we note but one, the resultant quest for happiness in the form of pleasure. Great shall be the reward of the superman of war or of commerce, in terms of standardized luxury! These tendencies in Germany are but feebly balanced by the rapidly weakening hold of Lutheranism and Calvinism, though Catholicism in the south shows a much bolder front. But these are questions not purely local to Germany, and must be seen later in a wider application.

German philosophy, especially from 1750 to 1850, holds a place of honour as a great factor in moulding European ideas. In France and England, however, there were movements of which the tendency was on the whole in an opposite direction. Victor Cousin introduced the ideas of German philosophy to France, but his eclecticism was unimportant in its effects compared with the work of his far more original contemporary Comte (1798-1857). For the antecedents of Comte we must look back to the Revolution, to Rousseau, and to Robespierre. Comte viewed the world as one from which Christianity had already been uprooted, leaving behind intellectual and spiritual anarchy. His mind was synthetical, Latin; he required certainty, preciseness, organization. And so he set to work to cut out of whole cloth a complete religious, philosophic, and moral system with which to endow humanity. This was Positivism. Needless to say that humanity, always instinctively



preferring custom to innovation, particularly when an effort of the mind or of conscience is required, turned its back on Comte; but the small group of his followers was eminent, and the doctrines he taught contained so many valuable elements, particularly in what has come to be known as social science, that at the present day Comte is steadily rising in the estimate of reflective men. He was the father of sociology; he wished to turn it into a religion; and it is not absolutely impossible that something may come of it all, in time.

A few words will serve to indicate the general movement of French ideas since Comte and Cousin. The latter's eclecticism was the natural starting-point for the relativist ideas of a school that followed, and that in turn prepared the way for the present-day teaching of evolutionary thought stripped of all inherited ancient or mediæval elements, which has more than once been alluded to. This progress again leads away from the old religious ideas, though it should be said that in France these produced a long line of eloquent defenders through the whole of the nineteenth century.

In England philosophy follows the modern movement and the national genius away from abstractions to practical observations, and the great names are generally to be found not in pure philosophy but just alongside of it. Adam Smith is the philosopher of economics, Newton, of mathematics, Bentham and Austin, of jurisprudence, Mill, of politics, Darwin, of zoölogy; and even when we reach pure philosophy



with Spencer (1820-1903) we find a confessed, if unwarranted, disdain for all previous philosophy, and a preoccupation with facts as strong as that of Bacon or any of his successors. But Spencer ranges over the whole field of human activity. He follows Comte in his insistence on sociology, but he adds what with Comte is ill-developed, a strong evolutionary sense. His work is non-religious, of vast influence, though faulty in its dogmatism and in its static form of expression. England, then, produces much in the realm of ideas, but less wide of scope, more practical in application than what we see on the continent of Europe. Beyond the seas in the new civilization of America we get little in the realm of ideas beyond one supreme burst of eloquence in Emerson who gives voice to the accumulated wisdom of altruistic rural democracy.

What has been said does not exhaust the subject. We have viewed the movement of European ideas in one sense only, the intellectual. We must now come to the popular movement. For in a religious organization, if ideas are fundamental the weight of sheer numbers is essential. And numbers mean, in later European history, the depressed masses. The question now is, what of them?

The course of the French Revolution admirably illustrates what is perhaps the supreme question in the popular movement of the nineteenth century. That great political upheaval began by a push of the middle class for power at a moment of extreme misgovernment. Then the lower class slowly began to



assert itself in terms of mob violence until it finally dominated the situation. Yet it failed to obtain permanent control; it always had to get its leaders from the middle class; its moments of power were fleeting and bad; it soon sank back to a subordinate position. And among the various reasons that brought this about, lack of education was the most obvious, perhaps the most fundamental. It is education, then, that must be singled out as the greatest factor in the position of the masses when the nineteenth century opens.

We have already touched on this subject. In France there was a new situation. Formerly the Church had been the only school of the people, and the priest the only schoolmaster. Now a contest had been begun, one that was to continue from the time of the Revolution to the present day, first for popular education, then for its control. The first point was early won. The second has seen the fierce struggle of the Church to retain power, and within the last few years the violent assertion by the Republic of the right of shaping the minds of her citizens according to the non-religious or anti-religious views now prevailing among her governing class. The effect of such action can hardly be overestimated, and it is not too much to say that after a very few generations have passed through the secularizing process France must of necessity become completely dechristianized. Italy, Portugal, and even Spain, follow in the footsteps of the first of the Latin nations.

In Germany a similar process is going forward,



though with some variations, due to the break between Protestant and Catholic, and also due to the strong inculcation of the political doctrine of Hohenzollern leadership. Divine right assumes a Christian God, and so in Germany the government effort is not so much against religions, as in the direction of merging the religious idea in that of the nation, or rather state, with its claim to duty on the part of the citizen, — a mode of thought that carries one back to Hegel, the War of Liberation, and the religious revival of the first half of the century. Officially religion is therefore minimized, because kept in its proper place to subserve a convenient purpose, while intellectually and in a latent sense it steadily loses its hold.

In the English-speaking world, while we must look to England for the intellectual movement, it is to America we must turn for the popular advance. In the United States the middle-class victory of the War of Independence did not result in a permanent hold of power. Democratic forces were at work, with only weak aristocratic elements to check them, and they triumphed early in the nineteenth century. Yet in the absence of any intellectual movement religious ideas remained about where they were. The Protestant sects stood their ground conservatively. Education for a while remained in a rut and under strict religious control. It was not until the second half of the century that a marked change took place, under circumstances that will presently be noted.

In England the result of the Wars of Religion had been a compromise both religious and political. By



the settlement of 1688 the middle class had obtained some measure of influence, and this was extended by slow degrees. It was not, however, until the middle of the nineteenth century that the push of the lower class for power was felt, nor till its end that it began to near its goal. But for various reasons education lagged behind, and though England early developed down to the middle class a splendid system of schools that still flourishes, the lower class is still neglected, to the great reduction of the national vitality. This middle-class education has been on the whole dominated by the ideas of State and Church.

While England has recently produced a strong but small kernel of intellectual activity turned sharply towards practical sociological questions with such thinkers as Spencer and Galton, America has concentrated her unequalled energy wholly on economic development. But, on the other hand, while England has followed a sluggish course in her educational development and in her religious thought, America, especially during the last quarter of a century, has displayed a great if superficial activity in this direction. This must be qualified, however, by not omitting to point out that the same religious wave that so strongly affected the Catholic world in the first half of the century had its counterpart in England. The conversion of Newman from the Anglican to the Roman Church was its most striking incident in one direction, the great growth of missionary effort in another.

If we try to estimate what has happened in America



during the most recent period we shall in reality accomplish something more. For America is no longer English save in language, and is fast becoming European. It may be said that the recent and present America stands for that part of Europe which little more than a century ago was submerged socially, politically, and in its religion. The new conditions have broken down social and political obstacles largely by dint of economic activity and almost boundless opportunity. This fact dominates all else. A great push for popular education was bound to take place under such circumstances. It has rapidly put the older formal sectarian education aside and has resulted in the over-rapid development of a huge school and college system, crude, and necessarily governed by the economic idea of applying education in terms of material gain and not of mind, or of conscience. It is perhaps unnecessary to state that indirectly this is anti-religious, and a great influence in the breaking-down of the old religious forms in America during the present generation.

In the situation of Christianity in America we may note the extreme tendencies that the march of European history has produced. From the slight break of Luther, and more fundamental divergence of Calvin, we saw how, in the crumbling away from the Anglican Church into the Protestant sects, we had the strongest assertion of freedom of conscience. The sectarianism of England was transplanted beyond the Atlantic, and, in a virgin soil, at first displayed a youthful intemperance worthy of Calvin or of Philip II.



This soon stiffened into a formalism not yet altogether extinct. But with the advent of the bustling nineteenth century, and especially its second half, great changes took place. With the most extreme political and social liberty unchecked by education, it was not unnatural that ideas should run loose, that the meaning of ancient dogmas should be forgotten and twisted into new shapes, that sect should beget sect, and become almost indefinitely multiplied. In an American year book, one hundred and forty-five sects are now enumerated, a few of which are of high antiquity and tradition like the small body of Moravians, but most of which have arisen in very recent times.

Let us see what may be said in general terms of these sects. Their beliefs represent a gradual watering out of the old belief of the Church. And this watering out, in its latest phases among the more highly educated congregations, represents the clash between the new spirit of scientific observation of facts, so largely used in industrial pursuits, and the mythological basis of religion. Miracle and myth are slowly being abandoned. The belief in Hell disappeared quite rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century; in another fifty years the belief in Heaven may quite conceivably have gone too.

The multiplication of sects, the juxtaposition of men and creeds of all races, helps in itself to break down belief. And America presents in some ways a spectacle similar to that of the Roman Empire in the first century, an age of universal religious tolerance



and of very slight conviction. The parallel is tempting, for it holds good at other points. But there are important differences as well, and among them may be noted emphatically that while the forward spirits, the men of intellect and conscience of the earlier age, were looking eagerly for a new faith that should give them the ethical satisfaction for which they longed, — and found it in the shape compacted by Paul, — at the present day it is otherwise. Even if the Christian churches are crumbling away, they still stand, as they did at the beginning, for an ethical principle, — and it is not for failure at that point that they are losing ground. The Church has had its painful moments of unmorality, and of inverted morality, yet it has never ceased to contain an ethical principle.

Again taking America for the extreme exemplification of a process that must sooner or later extend wherever Protestantism is established, we may note particularly the position of the minister in those sects that adopted the Calvinistic system of Church government. The minister is paid by his congregation, is largely under the influence of what shall please it. As faith declines the congregation becomes more and more a social organization, the service a social rite, the minister a social leader. His flock wants music, and flowers, and meetings, and ceremonies to fit its whims. The minister tends to follow the lead of the master who holds the purse-strings, lapses more and more into the social entertainer, and preaches from the newspaper instead of from the Bible. Even in the



few great universities of America, pulpit utterances are too often insincere, half-educated, popular in the worst sense.

While Protestantism inch by inch surrenders its fundamental beliefs, the Catholic Church (and in less degree its Anglican and Lutheran offshoots) maintains the position we have seen it assume under the Pontificate of Pius IX. Since the Vatican Council there has been no wavering. Not an inch has been conceded to the modern world. A vast mass of literature is yearly placed on the Index, while a steady and world-wide effort is made to keep Catholic minds untouched by modern ideas. The Pope still holds the presence of the king of Italy in Rome illegal. He affects to be a prisoner in his palace, his cathedral, and his gardens. And so long as he maintains that position, he continues non-national, the head of all Catholic Christians. Should he accept the plea of many Catholics and yield his claim to temporal power, then, in the opinion of the party now in the ascendant, he would sink back at once into the position of chaplain to the king of Italy. As to this, what the future holds in store cannot be predicted. Will the Popes continue to hold out? Will the kings of Italy continue successfully along their middle course between hostile Catholicism on one side and hostile radicalism on the other?

Be that as it may, and it is one of the big questions of the near future, how is Catholicism actually situated? The great democratic masses of to-day have in large part escaped from the fold. Again taking the ex-



treme example of Europe in America, not more than one eighth of the population, and that poorly educated, is Catholic, while more than one half of the rest, who still generally describe themselves as Christians, have no regular church affiliation. What a contrast with that time so very few years ago when in almost every little village of Europe the Catholic, Lutheran, or Anglican priest shepherded his flock under the closest supervision, when dissent, abstraction, and nonconformity were almost unknown.

At the present day the Catholic Church endeavours to maintain itself on precisely the old lines. It is almost easier now than it was some centuries ago to appreciate the comforting side of the doctrine of authority. For now the opposite doctrine of toleration prospers, and is accompanied by unpleasant features, — the torturing uncertainty of so many pious minds, the crass materialism of others. Authority is for many the avenue of escape from these things, and that is why so much nobility of living and high intellectuality is still to be found in the ranks of the clergy. This example, backed by a great tradition and machinery, lends much weight to the Church, and the concentration of its effort and intelligence on controlling minds and consciences surely means that among the less educated nations more than one chance will present itself for regaining some of the lost ground.

On the whole, the vital principle that has given Christianity its long and painful history resides in the Roman Church, and has not been moved thence



by the Reformation and the assertion of freedom of thought. Nor will rationalizing on the truth or untruth of the Roman dogma help the doubter. For what is truth? It is what we believe. And what do we believe? Sometimes what is demonstrated by reason, but more often that merely which we have frequently repeated. And since not we only have repeated the formulas sacred to the Blessed Virgin and the Trinity, but those before us back to generations so remote that Mary was then not Mary but Diana, and Ceres, and Astarte, and that great Asiatic mother of the Gods whose annals have no beginning, we should realize that it will be some time yet before a greater truth than that of Rome can be invented to take its place.

Even more than this can be said of the central legend of Christ, which to so many is all that remains of the meaning of the old faith. For not only does it contain the great tradition of the redeemer god, sacred to so many ages and countries, but in its probably true historical connection with actual poverty and suffering it strikes a chord immensely sensitized during the last two hundred years. The humanitarian preoccupation distinguishes our age from all other ages, and it helps those who, going back to pre-Roman Christianity, throw dogma to the winds and preach, very much as Paul did, Jesus only. This same preoccupation also tells, however, in an opposite direction, in that of social science dissociated from all Christian formulas. For what does Comte lack but a legend to be the originator of a new religion? And if the



legend and the mystery are of the essence of religion, would not the myth of a redeemer god affixed to Comte give us about the same result as humanitarian and undogmatic Christianity? If all this is true, does it not reinforce the point so often emphasized in these pages, that what is distinctively Christian is the Latin idiosyncrasy of thought, of aspiration, that bound Europe for so many centuries in the iron chains of the great Græco-Roman-Judaic composite structure, the history of which we have attempted to trace through the centuries?

We saw it emerging obscurely and confusedly, at the very moment when the Roman Empire was coming into existence, from the crucible of the decayed religions and philosophies of hellenized Asia. We tried hard to catch some faint glimpse of the mysterious and elusive personality who gave it his name, and with Paul we came to the statesman and prophet of revolted conscience and imperial views who imparted to it form and stability. Through the downward course of the crude, inhuman civilization of Rome we saw it steadily rise, till with the fall of the Empire it sat in Rome herself, whence it surveyed with uncertain eyes the chaos of teutonized Europe. Quickly it rose to the situation, embodied the Roman ideas in a new and loftier form, and learned to play on the superstition and ignorance of men, while urging them to charity and virtue. We saw its great effort for theocratic empire fail, and the rise of new languages and new ideas in a more complex civilization, until the heedless Popes of the Renais-



sance were suddenly faced by deep-founded revolt. Then followed the most horrible of the many pages of blood that stain the Christian annals, and at a ghastly price Europe in part liberated her mind from the Latin constraint. From that day to our own the generations are not many, yet they have witnessed changes so momentous that to-day we have reached a point whence we can look backward and trace with reasonable accuracy, and charity, the birth, rise, height, and decline of the Christian Church. Precisely what stage that decline has reached it is not yet possible to estimate.

THE END







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